THE MONSTROUS COLLECTION

STEVE NILES & BERNIE WRIGHTSON

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DEAD, SHE SAID

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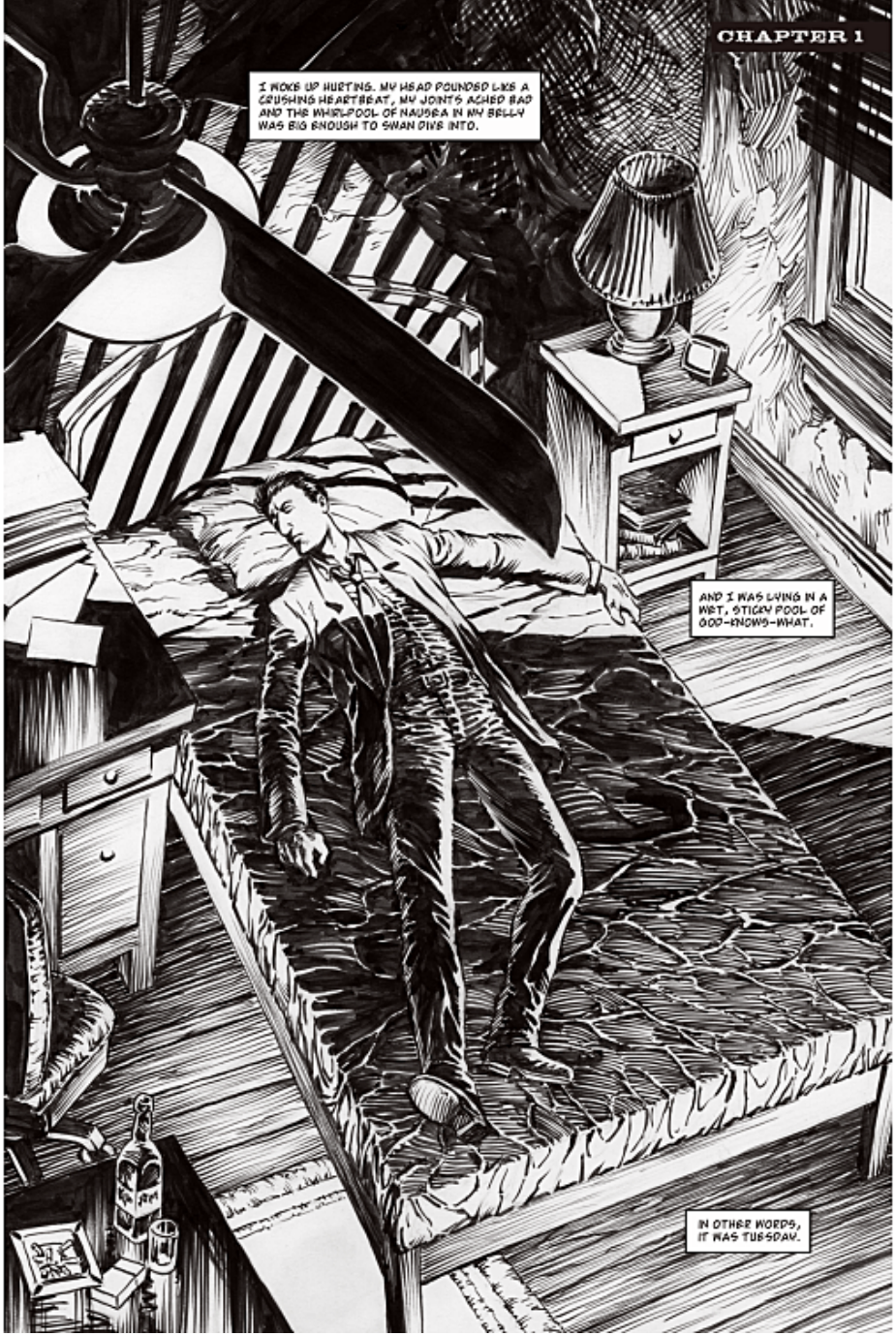
DEAD, SHE SAID


CHAPTER 1
I WOKE UP HURTING. MY HEAD POUNDED LIKE A CRUSHING HEARTBEAT, MY JOINTS ACHED BAD AND THE WHIRLPOOL OF NAUSEA IN MY BELLY WAS BIG ENOUGH TO SWAN DIVE INTO.
AND I WAS LYING IN A WET, STICKY POOL OF GOD-KNOWS-WHAT.
IN OTHER WORDS, IT WAS TUESDAY.

I'D HAD THE SAME MORNING THE DAY BEFORE AND THE DAY BEFORE THAT. SOMEWHERE BETWEEN I'LL HAVE ONE MORE AND I BETTER GET GOING, I ALWAYS GET LOST AND STAMPEDE RIGHT DOWN DRUNKEN RAMPAGE AVENUE.
POINT YOUR ACCUSING FINGER SOMEWHERE ELSE, JACK. I DRANK. I DRINK. IT'S WHAT I DO IN BETWEEN TRACKING SCUMBAGS AND CRACKING HEADS FOR INFO TO CRACK ANOTHER SCUMBAG HEAD.
I LIKE THE ESCAPE.
NOW THE TRICK WAS GETTING MY EYES OPEN.
AS A TRASH TRUCK BANGED DUMPSTERS IN THE ALLEY OUTSIDE THE WINDOW, I REALIZED TWO THINGS, NEITHER ONE WAS VERY GOOD.
I HURT LIKE FUCK.
NOT JUST HANGOVER PAIN. THIS WAS A BURNING DEEP IN MY BELLY AND SHOOTING OVER EVERY INCH OF MY FLESH.
CRACK
I WANTED TO PUKE. I WANTED TO CRAWL OUT OF MY SKIN.
SNAP
IT TOOK EVERYTHING I HAD JUST TO MOVE MY HEAD.

THIS WAS NOT LIKE EVERY OTHER DAY.
CRUNCH
MY JOINTS WERE LOCKED LIKE SOMEONE FILLED THEM WITH CEMENT.
IT FELT LIKE RIGOR MORTIS OR LIKE I WAS FROZEN. EVEN MOVING MY FINGER BURNED LIKE A HOT POKER IN THE EYES... THREE TIMES.
CRUUUNCH
CRACK
SNAP
POP
I'D ONLY BEEN AWAKE THIRTY SECONDS AND I ALREADY WISHED SOMEBODY WOULD PUT A BULLET THROUGH MY HEAD JUST TO STOP THE PAIN.

NO SUCH LUCK. NO GUN AND NOBODY TO PULL THE TRIGGER AND, BELIEVE ME, THAT WAS A BIG A LOT OF GOONS WOULD LEAP AT IN THIS TOWN.
CRACK
I HAD TO GET MYSELF OUT OF THIS MESS.
I HAD TO FIGHT.
KUUUUGH!
OAH, MY FUCKING GUT.
THAT WAS THE FIRST MOMENT I REALIZED I MIGHT BE THE SOURCE OF THE HOT, STICKY WET.
OR MORE TO THE POINT, MY GUT WAS.

I HAD A HOLE IN MY BELLY.
A WOUND, NO DOUBT.
THE WOUND WAS HOT TO THE TOUCH, HOTTER THAN ANY INFECTION I'D EVER HEARD OF, AND WHEN I POKED IT, MY INSIDES WERE EAGER TO ESCAPE THE HEAT.
CLICK
SON-OF-A—
I DIDN'T TAKE A GENIUS OR MEDICAL WIZ TO FIGURE THIS ONE OUT.
I'D BEEN SHOT.
I'D SEEN ENOUGH WOUNDS IN MY DAY TO KNOW GUYS DON'T USUALLY SURVIVE BELLY SHOTS FROM A SLUG.
THE WAY MY MUSCLES CREAKED AND MOANED, I GUESSED GUYS WITH BELLY WOUNDS DON'T USUALLY SIT UP IN BED, EITHER.
CHRIST.
I WAS SO SCREWED.

WELL, THERE WAS NO POINT IN PANICKING. AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT I TOLD MYSELF.
I HAD TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY.
I'D BEEN SHOT. THAT MUCH WAS CLEAR, BUT WHO SHOT ME? AND WHY WAS I STILL AWAKE. FROM THE LOOKS OF THE MATTRESS I'D LOST, WELL, JUST ABOUT ALL OF MY BLOOD.
BY RIGHTS, I SHOULDN'T BE STANDING. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN SLEEPING IN A COFFIN.
I DANCED AROUND THE OBVIOUS. I DIDN'T WANT TO ADMIT WHAT WAS RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME.

STIFF LIMBS?! THAT WAS CALLED RIGOR MORTIS.
NO USE AVOIDING THE OBVIOUS...
...I WAS DEAD.
ANNOYED AS HELL AND DEAD.

BUT WHO'D KILLED ME? SHIT, LIKE I SAID BEFORE, IT COULD BE ANYONE.
I'D SPENT THE BETTER PART OF TWO DECADES PUTTING THE HURT ON THE SCUM OF THIS CITY.
FROM CHEATING HUSBANDS TO MURDERING WIVES, I WAS THE GUY THEY CALLED. AND FOR EVERY CLIENT WHO CALLED, THERE WERE TEN OUT THERE WHO HATED ME FOR IT.
MY SUSPECT LIST MIGHT AS WELL HAVE BEEN THE FUCKING PHONE BOOK.
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER TO ASSEMBLE A LIST OF PEOPLE WHO *DIDN'T* WANT ME DEAD.

I figured the best place to start was trying to defog the haze of the previous night.
Somewhere in the murk of my brain was a clear picture, but I was drawing a blank. Total blackout.
I didn't stay alive this long being a complete a-hole.
I knew when I was licked.
I needed help.
BRRRR RING BRRRR RING

YEAH? COOGAN HERE...
...CHRIST, WALTER HOW ARE YOU? BELIEVE IT OR NOT I WAS JUST ABOUT TO DROP YOU A LINE.
I'M FINE, JOE. BUT I HEAR THINGS DIDN'T GO SO GOOD FOR YOU LAST NIGHT. WORD FROM THE BEAT BOYS IS THAT YOU HAD ANOTHER ROUGH NIGHT.
YEAH? SPELL IT. I'M SORT OF DRAWING A BLANK. ANYBODY GET HURT?
SINCE YOU ANSWERED, I GUESS NOT.
WHAT D'YA MEAN BY THAT?
UNIFORMS SAID YOU WERE FIGHTING WITH SOME GUY BECAUSE YOU THOUGHT HE WAS FOLLOWING YOU.
THEN THE GUY LEAVES. YOU FOLLOW AND THE NEXT THING, SOMEBODY REPORTS A SINGLE GUNSHOT IN THE ALLEY, BUT WHEN THEY CHECK IT OUT THEY JUST FIND BLOOD AND NOTHING ELSE. ANYTHING COMING BACK NOW?
YEAH, LIKE A RASH. KEEP TALKING. GOT A DESCRIPTION OF THIS GUY I WAS FIGHTING?
ONE OF THE UNIFORMS SAID THE GUY LOOKED LIKE, AND I'M QUOTING HERE, SOME "PETER LORRE WITH A BEARD."

PETER LORRE? AW, CHRIST.
SOMEBODY YOU KNOW?
YEAH. SMALL-TIME GRIFTER. NOT VERY GOOD, BUT A DECENT VEG. NAME'S AUSTIN "STICKS" CUTLIP.
WHAT KIND OF WEIRD-ASS NAME IS THAT? YOU WANT ME TO HAVE HIM PICKED UP?
NO. I'LL DEAL WITH IT.
JUST DO ME A FAVOR AND DON'T KILL THE GUY.
I CAN'T MAKE ANY PROMISES.
I'M SERIOUS, COGGAN.
SO AM I.
LISTEN TO ME, COGGAN. I DON'T WANT ANY—
CLICK
AUSTIN CUTLIP. I COULDN'T FUCKING BELIEVE IT.

HE WAS A CHEAP CROOK AND AN ERRAND BOY OR HIRED MUSCLE FOR ANYBODY WITH A DIME TO SPEND, BUT I STILL LIKED THE GUY
TOO BAD HE KILLED ME.
IT WOULD DEFINITELY PUT A STRAIN ON THE FRIENDSHIP.
MISS GAYLORD UPSTAIRS IS COMPLAINING ABOUT A SMELL.
YOU SMELL ANYTHING STRANGE IN YOUR PLACE?
NOPE...
...SEE YOU AROUND.
203

NOW, S. GOT—
—OW!
HEY!
THE WOODS
DARN. HE GOT AWAY.
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO WITH IT ANYWAY? NO WAY MOM WILL LET YOU TAKE IT HOME.
SHE LET ME HAVE A TURTLE. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?
FROGS JUMP AND GIVE YOU WARTS.
FROGS DO NOT GIVE YOU WARTS.
THAT'S RIGHT. I FORGOT. IT'S LITTLE BROTHER'S WHO GIVE WARTS.
I'M GONNA TELL MOM AND DAD YOU'RE BEING MEAN.

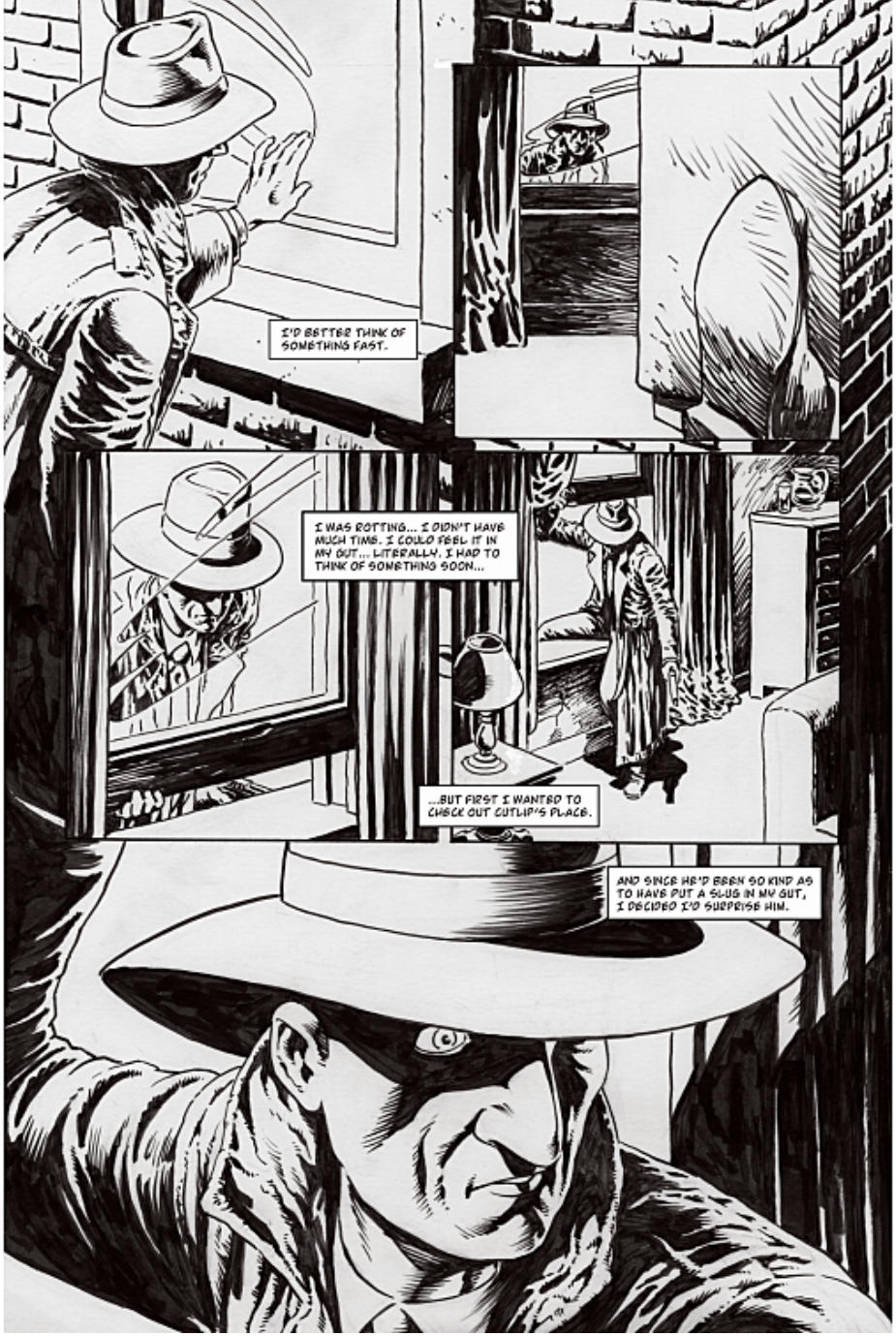
"TELL 'EM. I DON'T CARE."
"I'M GONNA! YOU JUST WAIT!"
HONEY, WHERE ARE THE KIDS? I DON'T WANT THEM WANDERING TOO FAR FROM CAMP.
NO WORRIES, BABE. WHEN THE SMELL OF THE BURGERS GRILLING HITS THEM, THEY'LL COME RUNNING LIKE THE ROADRUNNER.
YES... AND EVERY BUG IN THE WOODS.
WE HAVE EVERY INSECTICIDE, BALM, AND BUG-LIGHT THEY HAD AT THE CAMPING SUPPLY STORE. I THINK WE'LL BE OKAY.
I HOPE THE KIDS REMEMBERED SUNSCREEN.
SWEETIE, YOU NEED TO RELAX.
I'LL RELAX WHEN I'M BACK IN MY COZY, MODERN HOME.
THAT TEARS IT. GET OVER HERE LADY.

BARKING ORDERS, ARE WE? I'M NOT ABOVE TAKING THE KIDS AND LEAVING YOU OUT HERE TO LIVE OFF GRUBS AND BARK, YA KNOW.
THAT TOUGH TALK WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE WITHOUT THE SWEETEST FACE I'VE EVER SEEN.
KISS ME.
UH, HONEY, WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS?
IF THEY COME BACK WE'LL HIDE IN THE GRASS.
CLICK-CLICK-CLICK-

HOLD STILL... HOLD STILL...
GOTCHA!
AHHHHHHHH!
WHAT'S THAT HORRIBLE SOUND?
MOM? DAD?
AHHHHHHHH!
MOM! DAD!
T... THEY... THEY'RE...

...THEY'RE GONE.
MOM... DAD?

THE CITY. 20 MINUTES LATER.
MY LANDLORD WAS RIGHT.
THERE WAS A BIG STINK AND IT WAS WAFTING FROM YOURS TRULY.
CHRIST—EVEN THE CABBY NOTICED AND HE SMELLED LIKE A BOWL OF HOT PISS.
I'D BETTER THINK OF SOMETHING FAST.
I WAS ROTTING... I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME. I COULD FEEL IT IN MY GUT... LITERALLY. I HAD TO THINK OF SOMETHING SOON....
...BUT FIRST I WANTED TO CHECK OUT CUTLIP'S PLACE.
AND SINCE HE'D BEEN SO KIND AS TO HAVE PUT A SLUG IN MY GUT I DECIDED I'D SURPRISE HIM.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AND SINCE HE'D BEEN SO KIND AS TO HAVE PUT A SLUG IN MY GUT, I DECIDED I'D SURPRISE HIM.

SHIT.
TURNS OUT THE SURPRISE WAS ON ME.
I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE ON THE DEAD SIDE EITHER.
POOR STICKS WASN'T GOING TO BE GETTING UP ANYTIME SOON. HE HAD THE SORT OF DEATH THAT WAS PERMANENT.

SAVING STICKS GOT HIMSELF TORN APART WOULD HAVE BEEN PUTTING IT NICELY.
FROM THE LOOKS OF HIM, HE WAS HACKED, CHOPPED, AND SLASHED TO DEATH WITH A GIANT PAIR OF HEDGE SHEERS.
IT APPEARED STICKS HAD GOTTEN A BIG PAYDAY, PROBABLY FOR THE JOB HE DID ON ME.
BUT CASH DIDN'T HELP LEAD ME TO WHO PAID HIM.
WHAT THE—

IT WAS ONE OF THE ODDEST THINGS I'D EVER SEEN, LIKE A RAZOR BLADE MADE OF BONE OR SOME KIND OF SUPER-PLASTIC.
I CAN EXPLAIN.
I CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR.

CHAPTER 2
TALKING MY WAY OUT OF THIS MESS SHOULD HAVE BEEN HARDER, BUT THE STEADILY RISING STENCH FROM MY ROTTING BODY MADE IT A BREEZE.
OF COURSE, I HAD TO PLAY IT OFF AS SOMETHING ELSE. IF I TELL THEM THE TRUTH THEY'D LOCK ME AWAY FOR SURE.
CHRIST, WHAT A STENCH!
I TOLD YOU DENTS I HAVEN'T SHOWERED FOR FOUR DAYS BECAUSE I'VE BEEN ON A STAKEOUT.
WHERE WAS THE STAKEOUT, A FUCKIN' SLAUGHTERHOUSE?!
FUNNY, GENIUS. KEEPING ME UNDER THESE HOT LIGHTS AIN'T HELPING, EITHER.

LOOK, OBVIOUSLY YOU DIDN'T CHOP UP "STICKS" LIKE THAT—YOU'D HAVE BEEN COVERED WITH BLOOD. BUT YOU *WERE* THERE, AND THAT MEANS YOU'RE CONNECTED, SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST SPILL IT SO YOU CAN GO TAKE A SHOWER AND WE CAN VENTILATE THE STATION.
I TOLD YOU TEN TIMES ALREADY. I HAD A TUSSLE WITH STICKS CUTLIP AND HE TRIED TO OFF ME, BUT IT DIDN'T TAKE. I WAS HEADING TO HIS PLACE TO SQUARE THINGS WHEN I FOUND HIM. YOU GUYS SHOWED UP A MINUTE AFTER I DID.
WHAT WAS HIS BEEF WITH YOU?
LIKE I *ALSO* SAID BEFORE, *THAT'S* WHAT I WAS TRYING TO FIND OUT.
YOU KNOW OR EVER HEAR OF A LADY, SOME SOCIALITE NAMED *MARGARET BAXTER*?
BAXTER? YEAH, SHE HIRED ME TO TAIL HER HUSBAND, SOME BIGWIG SCIENTIST DOCTOR OR SOMETHING.
MIND IF I SMOKE?
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SAY THIS, BUT... PLEASE GO AHEAD. SERIOUSLY, COGGAN, MAYBE YOU SHOULD GO SEE A DOCTOR. THAT SMELL AIN'T NATURAL.

SO I FOLLOWED THIS DOCTOR BAXTER BECAUSE MRS. BAXTER THOUGHT HE WAS GETTING SOME ON THE SIDE.
WAS HE?
NO. I FOLLOWED DR. BIG BRAIN AROUND FOR TWO WEEKS AND ALL HE DID WAS WORK IN HIS LAB DAY AND NIGHT. I NEVER SAW ANOTHER SOUL.
I WAS WORRIED THAT MAYBE ONE OF HIS SECURITY CAMERAS SPOTTED ME, BUT ASIDE FROM THAT, IT WAS UNEVENTFUL.
WHAT'S THIS HAVE TO DO WITH STICKS GETTING CHOPPED UP LIKE A CHINESE CHICKEN SALAD?
WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE THE LAST PAYCHECK STICKS RECEIVED WAS A CHECK FOR FIVE GRAND.
THE CHECK WAS SIGNED BY DR. BAXTER, NOT HIS WIFE.

I SENT A CAR BY DOC BAXTER'S LAB IN GLENDALE, BUT THE PLACE WAS CLEANED OUT. LOOKED LIKE HE MOVED OUT OF THERE IN A HURRY.
STUPID!
BAM
WHAT? CALM DOWN.
THINK IT THROUGH... THE WIFE HIRED ME TO TAIL THE HUSBAND. SAW I'M RIGHT ABOUT HIM SPOTTING ME.
HE THINKS I'M SOME SORT OF SPY OR SOMETHING AND PAYS STICKS TO TAKE ME DOWN.
MAKES SENSE, BUT STICKS DIDN'T KILL YOU.
BUT HE DID CASH THE CHECK.
LOOKS LIKE YOU BOYS NEED TO FIND DOC BAXTER. HE'S YOUR MAN, NOT ME.
DON'T LEAVE TOWN. WE MIGHT NEED TO TALK TO YOU AGAIN... AND FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, GO HOME AND TAKE A SHOWER, HAVE SEX WITH A SKUNK, ANYTHING.

I HATED LYING TO WALTER, BUT TELLING HIM THAT STICKS HAD MANAGED TO KILL ME WOULDN'T HAVE HELPED.
I HAD A MORE FACTS, BUT A LOT MORE NEW QUESTIONS.
WHY WOULD THIS DR. BAXTER WANT ME DEAD? I JUST TAILED HIM BECAUSE OF HIS WIFE'S SUSPICIONS.
I WASN'T GOING TO GET ANY ANSWERS STANDING IN THIS RAIN...
ON DUTY
...AND MY PERSONAL STENCH WASN'T THE ONLY THING GETTING WORSE. I COULD FEEL MY SKIN STARTING TO SOFTEN.
HELL, I'D CLEARED HIM. IF ANYTHING HE SHOULD BE HAPPY I STRAIGHTENED THINGS OUT WITH HIS OLD LADY.
YEAH, WELL, YOU DON'T SMELL TOO GREAT EITHER, PAL!
IF I DIDN'T DO SOMETHING AND FAST, MY SKIN WOULD SOON START FALLING OFF MY BONES LIKE MELTED ICE CREAM FROM A POPSICLE STICK.

THAT'S WHEN I DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO TAKE A CHANCE AND CALL VERONICA HOWARD.
TALL, DARK, BEAUTIFUL VERONICA.
ALL THAT AND SHE WAS ONE OF THE TOP MEDICAL EXAMINERS IN THE CITY. HER FAMILY ALSO OWNED ONE OF THE BIGGEST MORTUARIES IN TOWN.
WE DATED ONCE OR TWICE.
SHE SAID I WAS TOO HANDSY.
WAIT UNTIL SHE GETS A LOAD OF ME NOW.
I KNEW SHE'D BLOW ME OFF IF I DIDN'T PLAY IT RIGHT, SO I MADE SURE TO WHIMPER LIKE A BEATEN DOG WHEN I CALLED.

IT'S LOGAN. DON'T HANG UP, PLEASE. I'M IN TROUBLE AND I NEED YOUR HELP. I'M SORRY, REALLY SORRY I GRABBED YOUR ASS ON OUR FIRST DATE.
SORRY, SIR. MAY I SPEAK WITH VERONICA, MR. HOWARD?
I'M COVERING THIS NIGHT SHIFT. IS IT OKAY IF WE SPEAK HERE?
THAT'S EXACTLY WHERE WE NEED TO TALK. I'LL BE THERE AS SOON AS I CAN.
I HAD ONE OTHER ERRAND TO RUN FIRST.

SNIFF SNIFF
I KNOW. I STINK. LET'S SKIP THAT SO I CAN GET OUT OF HERE.

SORRY TO DROP IN LIKE THIS, DOC.
I HEARD YOU WERE DEAD. WHAT'S THAT? YOU BRING ME CRAB LEGS?
I KNOW THIS MIGHT NOT BE YOUR AREA OF EXPERTISE, BUT I THOUGHT MAYBE IT WAS FROM A LOBSTER.
LOBSTERS DON'T HAVE GILLS.
WHAT DOES?
THIS BIG? I'M NOT SURE. THIS ISN'T MY FIELD, THAT MUCH I KNOW.
CAN YOU ASK ONE OF YOUR EGGHEAD COLLEAGUES?
I'LL MAKE SOME CALLS.
I HAVE ANOTHER APPOINTMENT. I'LL CHECK BACK IN LATER.

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

RRRR

NUUUUUH.
GOOD MORNING, MY PETS. I'VE BROUGHT HONEYDEW MELONS FOR THE BABIES.

NUUUUUH.

GIVE THE LARVA MOST OF THE HONEYDEW. THE OTHERS ARE WORKING ON GETTING MORE MEAT FOR THE LARVA. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
NUUUUUH.
GOOD.
AHHHH, HOW ARE YOU TODAY, MY PETS? WANDER FAR? HAD ADVENTURES?
I'M GOING TO NEED ALL OF YOU TO RUN A COUPLE MORE ERRANDS.
THE MEAT SUPPLY JUST ISN'T HOLDING UP AND IF WE'RE GOING TO GROW A FULL COLONY, WE'LL NEED PLENTY, RIGHT, BOY?

FOLLOW THIS SCENT. TAKE THEM ALL.
ALIVE IS BETTER, BUT DEAD WILL SUFFICE!
PUT THAT BACK! THE MELON IS FOR THE BABIES ONLY!
WELCOME TO THE WORLD, LITTLE FELLA.
SOON, IT WILL BE OURS.

HOWARD & FAMIL
MORTUARY
BY THE TIME I REACHED VERONICA'S MORGUE, I COULD FEEL MY ORGANS DRIPPING INSIDE MY BODY.
♪ ...DECLARE HIS AN EMERGENCY! COME ON AND SPREAD SENSE OF URGENCY! ♪
-SNIFF-
-SNIFF-
WHAT THE CHRIST? DID SOMEBODY FORGET TO EMPTY THE—?
—COOGAN?
HEY, BABE. STILL UP FOR THAT DATE?

LET'S SIDESTEP THE OBVIOUS, SHALL WE? I STINK. I SMELL. I'M THE SMELLIEST THING ON EARTH—THAT'S BEEN FIRMLY ESTABLISHED. CAN WE JUST SKIP ALL THAT?
AND YOU LOOK TERRIBLE!
YEAH, I KNOW THAT TOO.
THERE'S NO TIME TO EXPLAIN, DOLL, SO HERE GOES. I WOKE UP THIS MORNING AND I HAD A HOLE THE SIZE OF A SOFTBALL THROUGH MY GUT. SOMEBODY PUT A SLUG THROUGH ME THE NIGHT BEFORE.
PEOPLE DON'T USUALLY SURVIVE SLUGS IN THE BELLY.
YOU'RE FREEZING... NO PULSE... NOTHING...

YOU'RE DEAD.
YEAH. THIS IS WHAT I'M SAYING.
AND THAT'S WHY I NEED YOUR KIND OF HELP. I'M FALLING APART HERE, BABE.
NO WAY THIS IS HAPPENING.
IT IS HAPPENING, AND IT'S HAPPENING FAST. IT'S GETTING HARD TO MOVE. FEELS LIKE MY SKIN AND BONES ARE SEPARATING FOR GOOD.
WHAT CAN I DO? YOU SHOULD GO TO A HOSPITAL!
I'M ALREADY DEAD.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT.
I WANT YOU TO EMBALM ME.

THE WAY I SEE IT, WHY WAIT 'TIL THANKSGIVING OR CHRISTMAS TO DEEP FRY A TURKEY?
THAT'S WHY I MARRIED YOU, GREG. A WOMAN LOVES A MAN WHO COOKS.
BRAAAAAAAGH!
THANKS, MOMMA.
CLICKA-CLICKA-CLICKA
YOU HEAR THAT SOUND?
CLICKA-CLICKA

SCREEE SCREEE
SCREEE SCREEE
AHHHHHHHH!
SPEEEEES! HAAAAALP!
CLKKA-CLKKA
CLKKA-CLKKA
CLKKA-CLKKA
CLKKA-CLKKA
CLKKA-CLKKA
CLKKA-CLKKA
AHHHHHHHH!

CLICK-CLICK-CLICK
CLICK-CLICK-CLICK
BOOM
AAHHHGH!
ARRRGH!
AHHHHHHHH!!

THIS MIGHT PINCH A BIT, COGGAN... I THINK.
DON'T WORRY, DOLL. I CAN'T FEEL A THING, AND I ALREADY BROKE UP ALL THE RIGOR MORTIS.
MOST PEOPLE I DO THIS TO ARE DEAD... REALLY DEAD.
I JUST HOPE IT WORKS. I'M ITCHING TO GET THE GUY WHO PAID FOR MY HIT.
GOT ANY IDEAS?
YEAH. ALL LINES SEEM TO LEAD BACK TO DR. BAXTER.
THE GUY YOU FOLLOWED A WHILE BACK?
YEAH, I'M THINKING HE FOUND OUT I WAS TRACKING HIM FOR HIS OLD LADY, BUT SINCE HE'S A BIG BRAIN HE PROBABLY THOUGHT I WAS LOOKING TO STEAL HIS SECRETS AND ORDERED THE HIT.
OKAY, HOLD STILL. I'M GOING TO START THE MACHINES. YOU MIGHT FEEL SOME PRESSURE.
CLK

LOOKS GOOD. BLOOD'S COMING OUT, FORMALDEHYDE'S GOING IN. HOW'S IT FEEL?
KINDA GOOD, ACTUALLY. I FEEL HOT AND COLD RUNNING THROUGH MY BODY.
WHY? WHAT COULD HAPPEN?

I'M WORRIED ABOUT THAT WOUND. I PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE PATCHED IT BEFORE EMBALMING.
WWWRRRRRRRRRRRRR
ZARD
OLOGICAL
WASTE

AH, JEEZ.
DAMMIT!
CHOK
THAT ANSWER YOUR QUESTION?
I HAVE TO PATCH THOSE OPENINGS BEFORE WE CONTINUE.
WE MIGHT AS WELL REMOVE YOUR ORGANS, TOO, WHILE WE'RE AT IT.
M... MY ORGANS? ALL OF THEM?
IT'S WORSE THAN I THOUGHT, AND YES, ALL OF THEM. I'LL LEAVE IN YOUR BRAIN JUST IN CASE YOU DECIDE TO USE IT.
NO JOKES, I'M GONNA PUKE.
YOU SHOULD SEE MY VIEW.

THAT'S IT. I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A QUICK VACUUM AND THEN FILL THE GAPS WITH SILICONE CAVITY-FILLER.
SILICONE? LIKE A FAKE BOOB?
NO, IT'S DURABLE, FLEXIBLE FOAM THAT I CAN INJECT INTO YOUR TORSO. IT WILL HOLD YOU TOGETHER AND PRESERVE WHAT'S LEFT.
WHAT ABOUT MY RIBCAGE?
I CAN REATTACH YOUR RIBCAGE BETTER THAN IT WAS BEFORE. I DO IT ALL THE TIME.
I FIGURED YOU JUST SLAPPED CORPSES TOGETHER WITH CHEWING GUM AND NEWSPAPER.
FUNNY. BUT NO. NOW SHUT UP SO I CAN FINISH.

CHRIST, I LOOK LIKE FRANKENSTEIN!
FRANKENSTEIN WAS THE DOCTOR, NOT THE MONSTER.
WHATEVER!
SO WHAT'S THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DR. BAXTER AND YOUR, UM, WALKING DEAD STATUS?
I DUNNO. WHEN I WAS TAILING BAXTER, I GOT A PEEK INSIDE ONE OF HIS LABS. THE PLACE LOOKED PRETTY HIGH-TECH, LOTS OF EQUIPMENT, RADIATION SIGNS, AND CAGES.
HE WASN'T CHEATING ON HIS WIFE, BUT HE WAS DEFINITELY OBSESSED WITH SOMETHING.
HOW DOES IT FEEL?
NOT BAD. SORT OF LIGHT AND FLUFFY. THE SMELL'S DEFINITELY GONE.
HERE. IT'S ONE OF MY BROTHER'S. IT SHOULD FIT.
YOU SAY BAXTER HAS RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS IN HIS LAB?
SURE LOOKED LIKE IT.

IT'S CRAZY... AND IMPOSSIBLE, AND MAYBE I'VE WATCHED TOO MANY MIDNIGHT MOVIES, BUT WHAT IF THE GUN OR THE BULLETS THAT SHOT YOU ORIGINATED FROM BAXTER'S LAB? IF ONE WAS RADIOACTIVE...
AT THIS POINT, NOTHING SOUNDS CRAZY.
WELL, I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING, BIG BRAIN'S, BUT IT SURE WOULD BE NICE TO KNOW WHAT I'M DEALING WITH. I'LL CHECK IN WITH ANDY SWIFT, SEE WHAT THAT THING WAS.
ANDY? YEAH, IT'S ME. WHAT HAVE YOU GOT?
ENTO-WHAT? YEAH, I'LL TALK TO HIM. PUT HIM ON.
HI. WHAT IS YOUR... OH, BUGS. OKAY. I GUESS THAT RULES OUT LOBSTER CLAW.
GIANT WHAT?
BREAKING NEWS
UM... COOGAN...

I THINK YOU BETTER SEE THIS.
CAN'T BE WORSE THAN WHAT I JUST HEARD.
CTION 8
LIVE
YOUR FATHER STILL HAVE THAT HOME ARSENAL?
COLLECTION. YEAH.
I'M GOING TO NEED TO BORROW A FEW THINGS.

CAREFUL NOW, DON'T GET THE HEADS MIXED UP WITH THE LIMBS!
OH, THAT'S A GOOD HEAD!
ARMS
THIS WILL FIT PERFECTLY ON MY LATEST MASTERPIECE!
KEEP SORTING, MY LOVELIES. I'LL BE IN THE OPERATING ROOM.

WHAT A BUSY, EXCITING DAY! TWO PROJECTS ALMOST COMPLETE.

OH, BOTHER.
YES, OSAR, I'M AT THE LAB JUST AS I SAID I WOULD BE.
NO, OSAR, I'M HERE ALONE.
AS YOU LEARNED, OSAR, I AM NOT A CHEAT. I JUST CLEANED UP THE LAST MESS YOUR ENDLESS PARANOIA CREATED.
KISS-KISS. SEE YOU AT HOME, MY OSAR. DON'T GO HIRING ANY MORE DETECTIVES, OKAY?
CLICK
BA'DOOM

BING-BONG! SOMEBODY CALL FOR AN EXTERMINATOR?!
YOU? YOU'RE DEAD! I HAD YOU KILLED!
IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN DEAD TO STOP ME, CHUMP.

YOU'LL RUIN MY EXPERIMENTS! GET HIM, MY PETS! GEEEET HIM!
DAMN! TOO MANY! TOO FAST!
THEY'LL YANK ME TO PIECES LIKE STICKS!
YES! TEAR HIM APART!
NOT SO FAST, BIG BRAIN!

HOW ABOUT YOU TELL YOUR BUGS TO BACK OFF AND JUST SURRENDER LIKE A NICE MAD SCIENTIST.
BUDDY, I COULD CARE LESS ABOUT YOUR SECRETS.

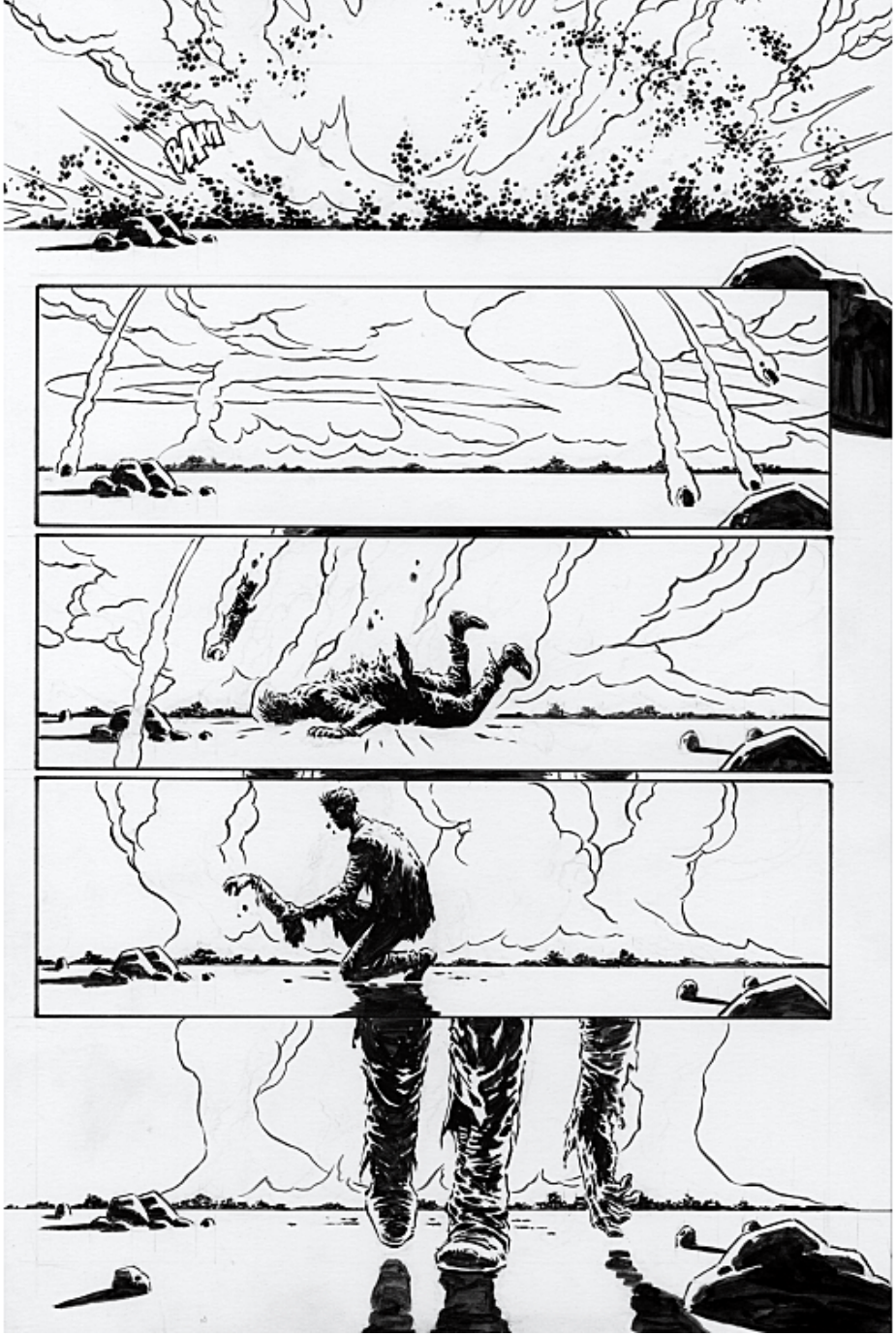
NEVER! YOU WILL NEVER STEAL MY SECRETS.

QUEEN SCENT
THIS IS FUR PAYBACK.
I GOT SOME BIG-BRAIN FRIENDS TOO.
SMASH!
AHH!
M... MY PETS?

NOOOOO!
AHHHHH!
VIESS.
TOO BASH.
NUUUUUH.

THERE. YOU GOT KIDS WAITING AT HOME FOR YOU.
OKAY, BEAT IT. SCRAM.
GET MOVING. I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE THIS PLACE IS SHUT DOWN, PERMANENT-LIKE.
JUST NEED TO GET THE DEVICE.
HEY!

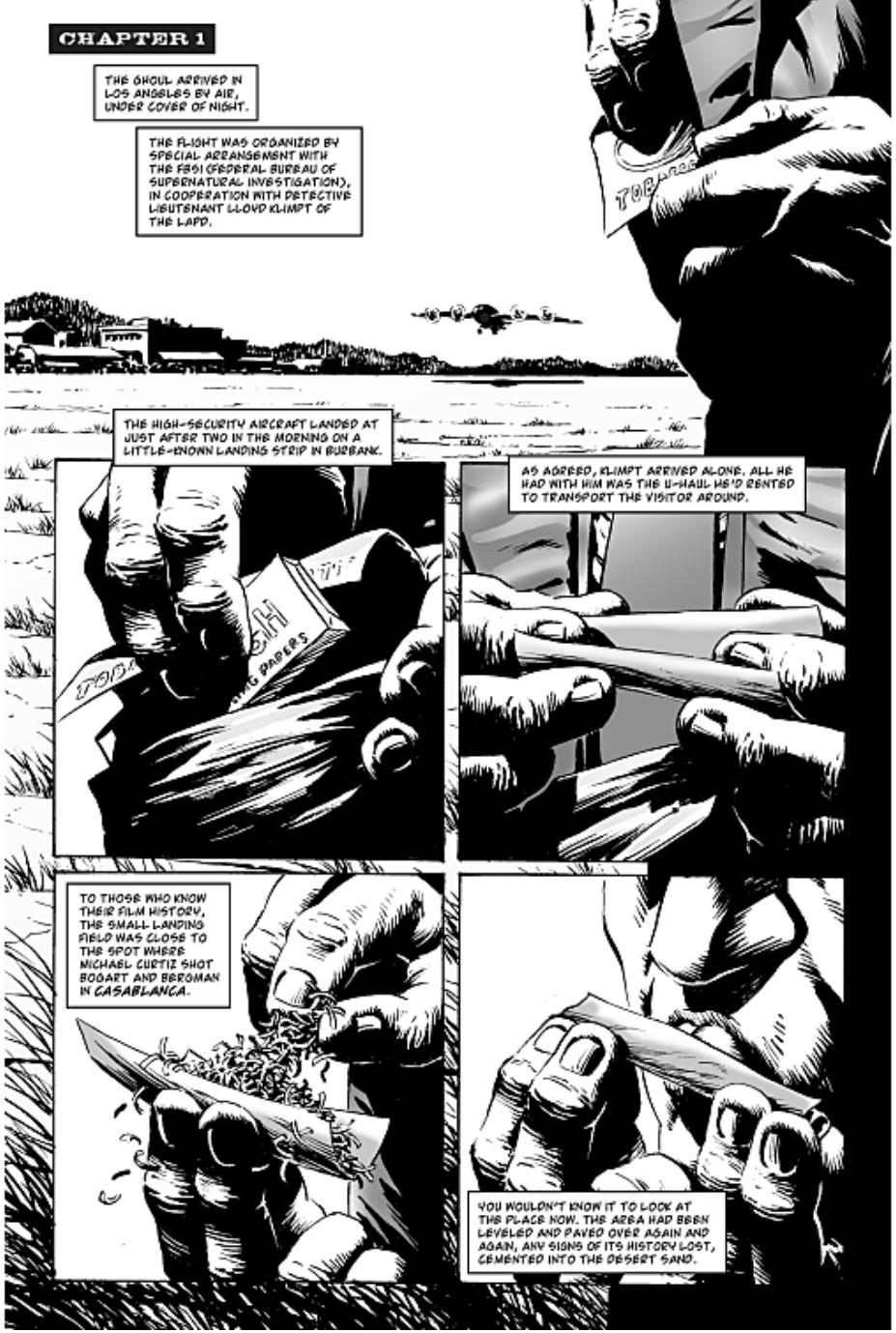
HOLY—
IT'S GONNA BE LIKE THAT, HUH?
BLAM!
CRAP.


BAM

LOOK AT THAT, NOT EVERYBODY HATED YOU.
JEEZ, IF I'D KNOWN, I MIGHT NOT HAVE LET YOU FAKE MY FUNERAL.
IT'S PROBABLY BEST IF YOU STAY LOW FROM NOW ON.
AS LONG AS I GOT YOU NEXT TO ME, BABE, I'M UP FOR ANYTHING.

THAT WOULD SOUND A LOT MORE SINCERE WITHOUT THIS HAND ON MY ASS.
SORRY.
THE END?

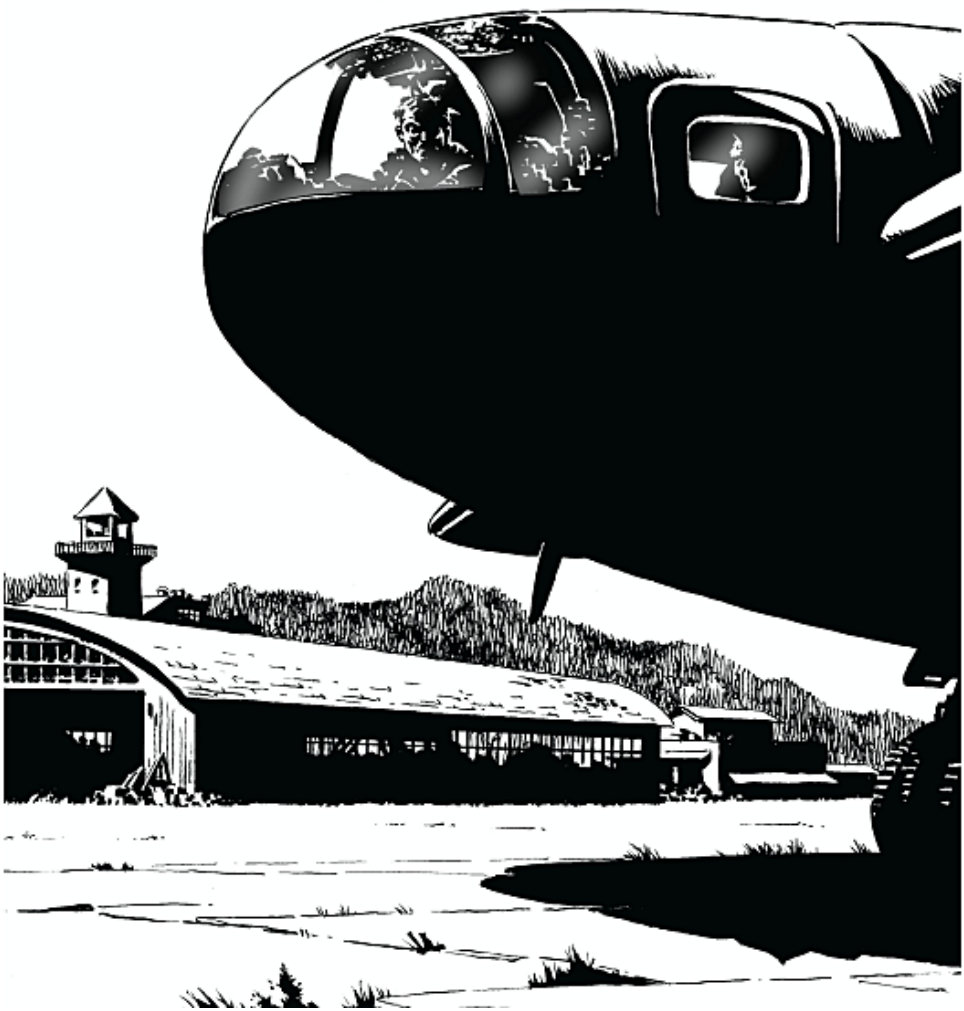
THE GHOUL
WRIGHTSON

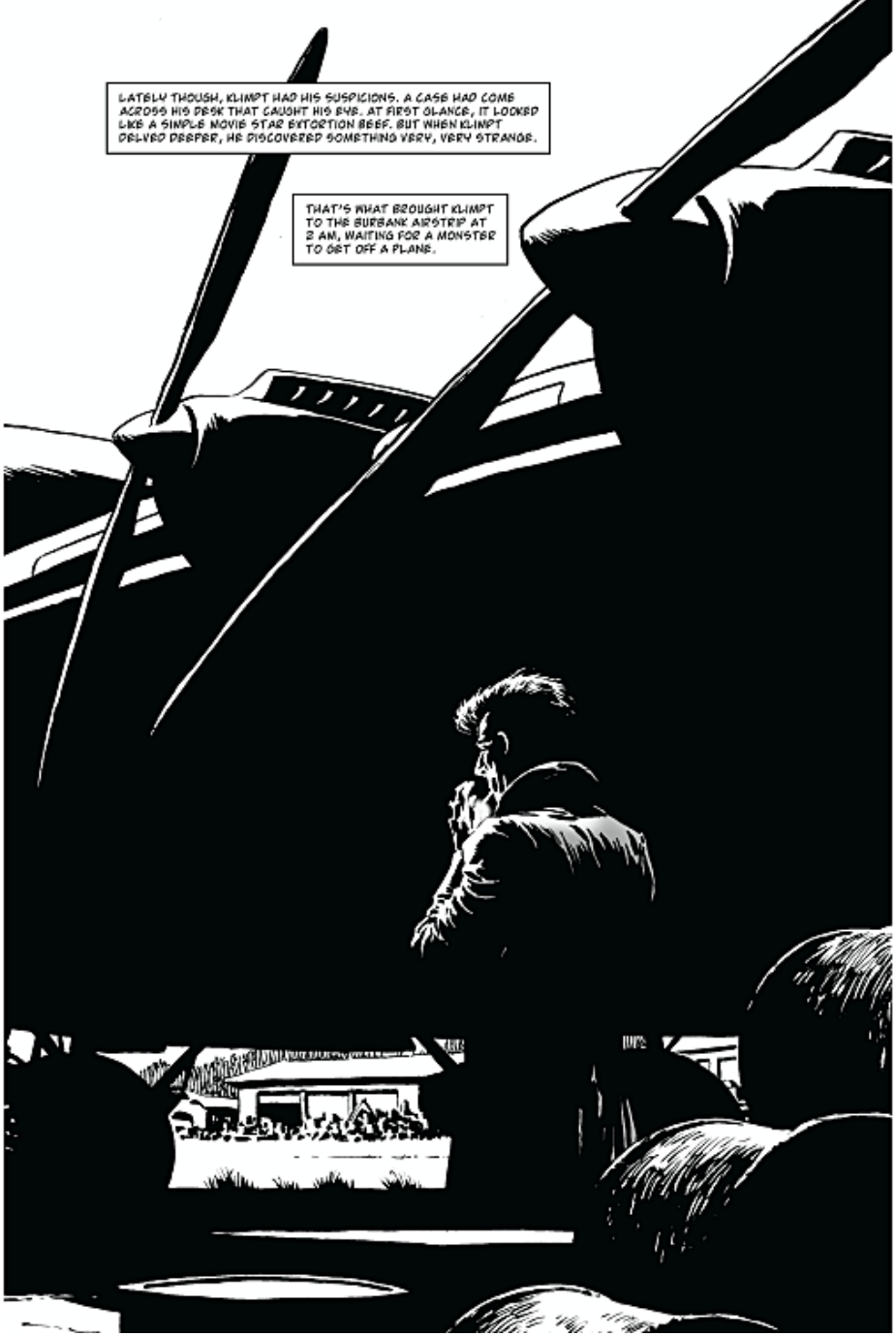

CHAPTER 1
THE GHOUL ARRIVED IN LOS ANGELES BY AIR, UNDER COVER OF NIGHT.
THE FLIGHT WAS ORGANIZED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH THE FBSI (FEDERAL BUREAU OF SUPERNATURAL INVESTIGATION), IN COOPERATION WITH DETECTIVE LIEUTENANT LLOYD KLIMPT OF THE LAPD.
THE HIGH-SECURITY AIRCRAFT LANDED AT JUST AFTER TWO IN THE MORNING ON A LITTLE-KNOWN LANDING STRIP IN BURBANK.
AS AGREED, KLIMPT ARRIVED ALONE. ALL HE HAD WITH HIM WAS THE U-HAUL HE'D RENTED TO TRANSPORT THE VISITOR AROUND.
TO THOSE WHO KNOW THEIR FILM HISTORY, THE SMALL LANDING FIELD WAS CLOSE TO THE SPOT WHERE MICHAEL CURTIZ SHOT BOGART AND BERGMAN IN CASABLANCA.
YOU WOULDN'T KNOW IT TO LOOK AT THE PLACE NOW. THE AREA HAD BEEN LEVELED AND PAVED OVER AGAIN AND AGAIN, ANY SIGNS OF ITS HISTORY LOST, CEMENTED INTO THE DESERT SAND.

THE SMALL ARMORED PRIVATE PLANE WAS SPECIALLY MODIFIED TO FIT THE GHOUL'S LEGENDARY SIZE, AND KLIMPT COULDN'T HELP BUT TAP HIS FOOT NERVOUSLY AS HE WAITED FOR THE DOORS TO OPEN.

BEING A COP IN LOS ANGELES, DETECTIVE KLIMPT HAD SEEN A LOT OF STRANGE STUFF, BUT NOTHING THAT EVER MADE HIM QUESTION THE NATURE OF REALITY ITSELF.

HE'D SEEN WEIRD THINGS, REAL CRIMES... THE WORST. HE'D WORKED THE MOST BRUTAL MURDER SCENES AND SOME OF THE ODDEST SUICIDES EVER RECORDED, BUT IN ALL HIS LIFE, HE NEVER BELIEVED IN ANYTHING THAT WENT BUMP IN THE NIGHT.




LATELY THOUGH, KLIMPT HAD HIS SUSPICIONS. A CASE HAD COME ACROSS HIS DESK THAT CAUGHT HIS EYE. AT FIRST GLANCE, IT LOOKED LIKE A SIMPLE MOVIE STAR EXTORTION BEEF. BUT WHEN KLIMPT DELVED DEEPER, HE DISCOVERED SOMETHING VERY, VERY STRANGE.
THAT'S WHAT BROUGHT KLIMPT TO THE BURBANK AIRSTRIP AT 2 AM, WAITING FOR A MONSTER TO GET OFF A PLANE.

LIKE MOST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, KLIMPT THOUGHT THE GHOUL WAS JUST A LEGEND.
NOTHING PREPARED HIM FOR THE MOMENT HE WAS TOLD BY A HIGH-RANKING LAPD OFFICIAL THAT THE GHOUL ACTUALLY EXISTED, AND IF KLIMPT HAD A CASE THAT TEETERED ON THE BORDER OF REALITY, THEN HE'D SET UP A MEETING.
AS IT TURNED OUT, THE LAPD AND NYPD BOTH HAD LONG-STANDING—AND SECRET—RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MYSTERIOUS GOVERNMENT AGENCY.
EVEN FROM THE TARMAC, KLIMPT COULD SEE THAT THE GHOUL'S BLACK LEATHER DUSTER AND FRANKENSTEIN BOOTS DID LITTLE TO HIDE THE FACT THAT HE WASN'T HUMAN.
BUT HE SURE AS SHIT WAS REAL.
YOU KLIMPT?

H... HOW WAS YOUR FLIGHT? WAS IT GOOD?
IF BY GOOD YOU MEAN SQUATTING IN A METAL TOILET PAPER TUBE FOR EIGHT HOURS... THEN, YEAH, IT WAS REAL GOOD.

SO, LOOK, MY TIME IS VALUABLE, OFFICER KLIMPT.
DETECTIVE LIEUTENANT.
WHATEVER.
UH... FEEL FREE TO CALL ME EITHER, OR CALL ME LLOYD. CALL ME KLIMPT. I DON'T CARE. WHAT SHOULD I CALL YOU?
UM, HOW ABOUT THE GHOUL, SINCE THAT'S MY NAME.
WE GOING TO GET THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD, OR WHAT? THE BOYS BACK AT HQ SAID YOU HAD SOMETHING "WEIRD" TO SHOW ME.
IT'S A CASE. NOT SO MUCH A CASE, REALLY, AS A THEORY I HAVE.
I'M HUNGRY.
WHAT?
I SAID I'M HUNGRY. ALL THEY HAD ON THE FLIGHT WERE HONEY-ROASTED PEANUTS. YOU EVER EAT A CASE OF NUTS? IT'S LIKE CHINESE FOOD AN HOUR LATER.

UL IT
-SELF
UM, YEAH... UH... THIS WAY... PLEASE.
I PUT SOME BLANKETS AND PILLOWS BACK THERE SO IT WOULDN'T BE SUCH A ROUGH RIDE.
WHAT AM I, A GERBIL? WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST SHRED UP SOME FUCKIN' NEWSPAPER?
I'M SORRY. THE INSTRUCTIONS SAID—
YOU GOTTA CALM DOWN. IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING, I'M GONNA NEED YOU COOL AND RELAXED.
DON'T WORRY. I'VE GOT YOUR BACK WHEN THE TIME COMES.
HAUL I
UR-SI
BACKUP? JUST DON'T GET IN MY WAY.

KIDDING!
YOU GOTTA LIGHTEN UP, PAL.
BAM
GOOD GOD, WHAT HAVE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?
HERE GOES NOTHING.

BLAAAAARGH!
PARDON.
NORMALLY KLIMPT WASN'T SUCH A STIFF, BUT NORMALLY HE WASN'T KIDDED BY A SLATE-COLORED, DEAD-LOOKING GIANT WITH AN ODDLY-SHAPED HEAD AND EYES THAT WOULD MAKE A DEMON SHIT ITS PANTS.
IT WAS A HARD ADJUSTMENT TO MAKE—KLIMPT HADN'T EXPECTED THE "GHOUL" IN THE GHOUL TO BE SO LITERAL. BUT THAT WAS PART OF BEING A COP.
I SUPPOSE YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW WHY I NEEDED YOU?
HE HADN'T ADVANCED UP THE RANKS BY STANDING STILL. HE HAD TO ADAPT AND HE HAD TO KEEP HIS EYE ON THE PRIZE.
THAT WOULD BE NICE.

IN THIS CASE, THE PRIZE WAS A FAMOUS CELEBRITY FAMILY SO WELL KNOWN, ALL ONE HAD TO SAY WAS THE ATWOODS, AND THREE GENERATIONS OF UNCANNY ACTRESSES CAME TO MIND.
THERE WAS POLLY ATWOOD, THE SILENT FILM STAR WHO SLID EASILY INTO TALKIES AND ROSE FOR A SECOND TIME, A FEAT FEW PULLED OFF.
Siren of the SAHARA
STARRING:
POLLY ATWOOD

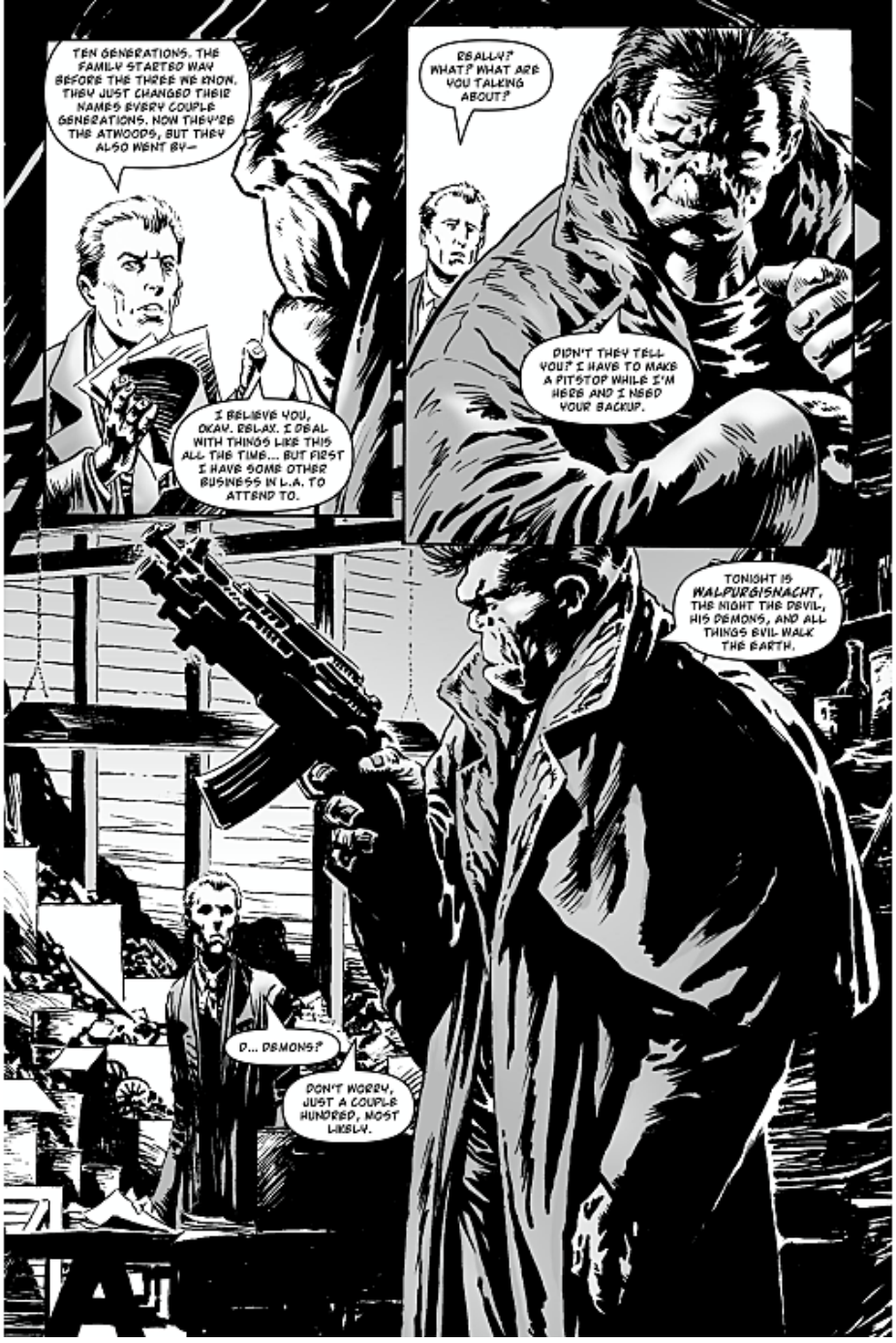
HER DAUGHTER DORIS ATWOOD RULED THE BOX-OFFICE FROM THE TIME SHE BEGAN ACTING.
HER DAUGHTER, POLLY'S GRANDDAUGHTER, ESTER ATWOOD WAS CURRENTLY HOLDING HER OWN WITH A COLLECTION OF AWARDS AND STUDIOS AT HER BECK AND CALL.
ELMPT TRIED TO EXPLAIN ALL OF THIS THE BEST HE COULD AS HE DROVE AND YELLED ABOVE THE ROAR OF THE DIESEL. THE GHOUL KNEW THE LATEST ATWOOD INCARNATION.
ESTER ATWOOD HAD PLAYED THE PRESIDENT IN ONE OF THOSE METEOR-DESTROYS-THE-EARTH MOVIES, WHICH HE ACTUALLY LIKED. HE HAD VAGUE MEMORIES OF HER MOTHER, BUT NONE OF POLLY, THE GRANDMOTHER STAR.

THAT'S WHAT THIS WHOLE THING HINGES ON.
I MISSED THE FIRST PART.
I SAID, YOUR LACK OF MEMORY AND SENSE OF HISTORY IS WHAT THE ATWOODS BANK ON.
LOOK, I DON'T SEE THAT MANY MOVIES, OKAY? IT'S A LITTLE TOUGH FOR ME TO CHECK OUT THE CREEP-SHOW AT THE MULTIPLEX, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
MY PLACE IS UP AHEAD. I SET UP THE FILES IN THE GARAGE.

WHAT'S THIS DUMP?
MY HOUSE.
SORRY.
HAUL IT UR-SELF
CHRIST, YER OWN PERSONAL FREEWAY AWNING. NO WONDER YOU'RE SO WOUND UP AND UPTIGHT.
AND I THOUGHT MY LIFE SUCKED.

HOLD ON A SEC.
AS YOU CAN SEE I'VE DONE A LOT OF RESEARCH, SO FEEL FREE TO—
I'M NOT READING ALL THIS SHIT. WHY DON'T YOU JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK ALL THIS IS ABOUT?
KLINPT REPEATED WHAT HE HAD SAID EARLIER, MORE OR LESS, THIS TIME USING PHOTOS TO EMPHASIZE HIS POINTS.
THE BIGGEST POINT BEING THE UNCANNY... HELL, SPOOKY RESEMBLANCE THEY ALL SHARED.
EXCEPT FOR CHANGES IN FASHION, MAKE-UP, AND HAIRSTYLE, THE ATWOOD WOMEN ALL LOOKED EXACTLY THE SAME AS EACH OTHER AT GIVEN POINTS IN TIME.

PICK AN AGE AND THEY LINE UP.
AND THIS MEANS... WHAT TO YOU?
I THINK THEY ARE ALL THE SAME WOMAN.
WAIT, WAIT, WAIT. THIS DOESN'T ADD UP. LOOK AT YOUR OWN EVIDENCE.
WE GOT PICTURES OF MOTHER AND DAUGHTER TOGETHER.
THEY CAN'T BE THE SAME AND HAVE KODAK MOMENTS, BUSTER.
YES, THERE ARE PICTURES OF THE GRANDMOTHER AND DAUGHTER TOGETHER, BUT NONE OF ALL THREE AND... BOTH WOMEN DIED EXACTLY ONE YEAR AFTER THE DAUGHTER GAVE BIRTH.
THAT SORT OF CLOSES THE WINDOW ON PHOTO OPS.
OKAY, THAT'S PRETTY WEIRD, BUT I'M GUESSING THERE'S ANOTHER WRINKLE.


TEN GENERATIONS. THE FAMILY STARTED WAY BEFORE THE THREE WE KNOW. THEY JUST CHANGED THEIR NAMES EVERY COUPLE GENERATIONS. NOW THEY'RE THE ATWOODS, BUT THEY ALSO WENT BY—
I BELIEVE YOU, OKAY. RELAX. I DEAL WITH THINGS LIKE THIS ALL THE TIME... BUT FIRST I HAVE SOME OTHER BUSINESS IN L.A. TO ATTEND TO.
REALLY? WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
DIDN'T THEY TELL YOU? I HAVE TO MAKE A PITSTOP WHILE I'M HERE AND I NEED YOUR BACKUP.
TONIGHT IS WALPURGISNACHT, THE NIGHT THE DEVIL, HIS DEMONS, AND ALL THINGS EVIL WALK THE EARTH.
D... DEMONS?
DON'T WORRY, JUST A COUPLE HUNDRED, MOST LIKELY.

CHAPTER 2
WALPURGISNACHT?
YOU GOT ANY SHOTGUNS, MAYBE SOMETHING WITH A SPEED-LOADER?
ALL I HAVE IS MY REGISTERED SIDEARM.
LEMME SEE WHATCHA GOT.
WELL, ISN'T THAT ADORABLE.
YOU KNOW A GOOD GUN SHOP?
NOT REALLY. I THINK—
I KNOW A PLACE.
I ONLY HAVE YOU FOR A LIMITED TIME. I'D REALLY PREFER IT IF WE CONCENTRATED ON THE ATWOOD CASE.
WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT HAS, BUT FIRST WE HAVE SOME DEMONS TO SHOOT.
NOW LET'S GET SOME GUNS.
SLAM

I'M NOT GOING IN THERE.
DON'T BE A WUSS. COME ON.
PORN
YOU ARE UNREAL.
THIS DOOR PROBABLY HAS MORE BACTERIA ON IT THAN AN EBOLA VICTIM.
USED DVDS $5.99 +UP
JUST COME ON.
IS JONES HERE?
IN THE BACK.
MAGAZINES
GOOD LORD. IS THAT EVEN LEGAL? POOR MONKEY.
PRIVATE
YOU KIDDING? THAT'S THE HAPPIEST CHIMP I'VE EVER SEEN.
NOK NOK

HEY, JONES.
G-MAN! HOW THE HELL ARE YOU?
NO WAY THIS IS LEGAL.
WHAT CAN I DO YA FOR, GHOUL?
MY FRIEND HERE NEEDS A WEAPON'S UPGRADE. KLIMPT, SHOW HIM YOUR GUN.
WELL, ISN'T THAT ADORABLE.
THAT'S WHAT I SAID!
DID HE GET IT AS A CRACKER JACK PRIZE?
ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT.
TAKE WHATEVER YOU NEED.

YEAH, THIS IS NICE. WHAT KIND OF AMMO DOES IT TAKE?
OH, YEAHHH.
THERE, NOW DOESN'T THAT FEEL BETTER?
ARE WE HUNTING DINOSAURS?
DAMN CLOSE TO IT.
THANKS, JONES.
HAPPY HUNTING.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?
34.11866° N. 118.3003° W.
HUH?
GRIFFITH PARK OBSERVATORY. JEZZUS, YER THE ONE WHO FREAKIN' LIVES HERE.
SO, WE'RE STILL GOING TO WORK ON MY CASE, TOO?
YEAH, I'VE BEEN CHEWING ON THAT A BIT.
I'M NOT SURE WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH HERE. SOMETHING'S UP WITH THE ATWOOD CHICKS, BUT I CAN'T PINPOINT IT. COULD BE SOME KIND OF GHOST OR UNDEAD THING, MAYBE A CURSE? WHO KNOWS, MAYBE A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL?
GREAT.

KLIMPT TRIED TO TAKE IT IN. SOMEHOW, WHEN HE ROLLED THE CASE OVER IN HIS MIND, HE AVOIDED WORDS LIKE SPIRITS AND DEMONS.
HE REALIZED HE HAD DONE WHAT HE HAD LEARNED AS A COP—KEEP IT BASED IN LOGIC. HE BLOCKED OUT THE SUPERNATURAL... HE STOPPED HIS QUERY RIGHT AT THE ABYSS OF THE IMPOSSIBLE.
BUT THE TRUTH WAS, EVEN THE GHOUL REALLY DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE WHAT WAS UP WITH THE ATWOODS.
EVERYBODY THINKS THE STRANGE AND THE SUPERNATURAL ARE ALWAYS MANIFESTED AS THINGS SUCH AS VAMPIRES AND WEREWOLVES.
ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES THEY ARE, MOST OF THE TIME SUPERNATURAL WEIRDOES CONSIST OF A SINGLE EVENT OR ENTITY—A SELF-CONTAINED, ONE-OF-A-KIND NIGHTMARE WITH A HORROR ALL ITS OWN.

ONCE, WHILE SPEAKING WITH A FORMER FBI MEMBER, DOC MACABRE, THE GHOUL MENTIONED A THOUGHT HE HAD ABOUT THE WORLDS OF THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE WORLDS ABOVE THE CLOUDS.
DOC MACABRE SAID, "THERE ARE AS MANY SPECIES ON LAND AND SEA AS THERE ARE SPIRITS, EACH ONE IS DIFFERENT AND, HENCE, A COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE CAN NEVER BE FULLY ACQUIRED."
IT WAS SHIT LIKE THAT THAT MADE THE GHOUL'S HEAD SPIN.
WE SHOULD PROBABLY PARK AT THE BOTTOM AND WALK IT.
WALK? IS THERE A REASON, OR DO YOU NEED EXERCISE?
HEY, ASSNT TIGHTASS. THAT WAS CLOSE TO A JOKE.
I'D JUST LIKE TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON. IS THAT TOO MUCH TO ASK?
I'LL EXPLAIN ON THE WALK.

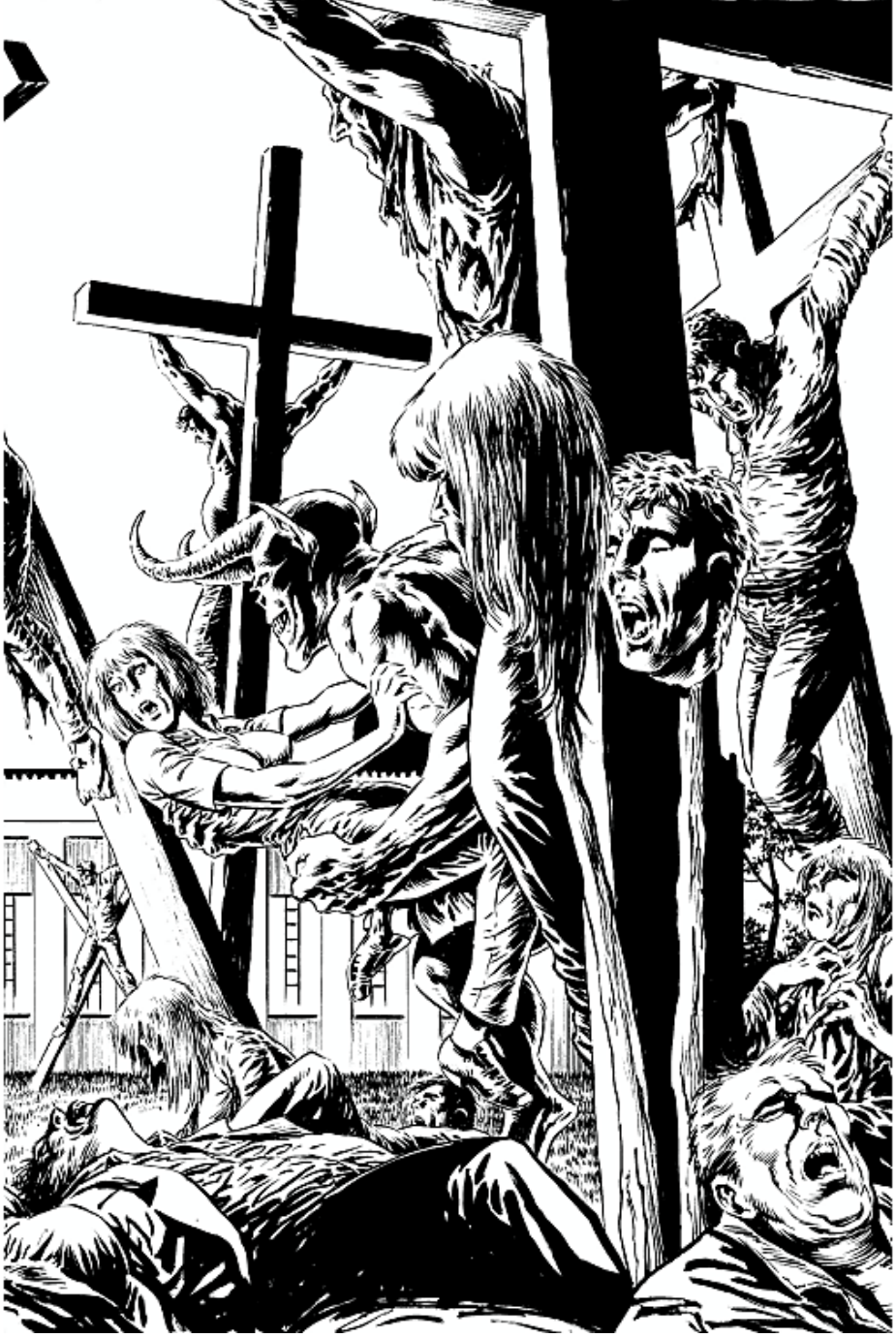
LOOK AT THAT—COPS TRYING TO GET THROUGH. THE SHIT MUST'VE HIT THE FAN ALREADY.
CAN'T GET THROUGH?
LOOKS LIKE SOME SORT OF SUPERNATURAL FORCE FIELD BLOCKING THEM, OR MAYBE AN INNER-DIMENSIONAL REALITY SHIFT. DAMN DEMONS.
WALK SLOWLY BECAUSE THE FIELD IS PROBABLY—
BAM
OOF!
—INVISIBLE.
WHAT IS IT?
HARD TO EXPLAIN. IT'S A SUPERNATURAL RESIDUE NOT UNLIKE ECTOPLASM, BUT EXTREMELY HARD.
YEAH. I NOTICED.
YOU KNOW HOW TO GET THROUGH IT?
NOT REALLY.
THEN IT'S A GOOD THING I'M HERE.

DOC MACABRE!

AH, KEVIN! GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
HEH, THAT'S THE GHOUL, DOC. I'M WORKING HERE. SO, WHAT BRINGS YOU TO LOS ANGELES? I THOUGHT YOU AND THE AGENCY WERE ON THE OUTS.
KEVIN?
I GOT A CALL FROM THE AGENCY ASKING THAT I ASSIST YOU BEFORE I CONTINUE WITH MY OWN MISSION AT HAND.
LOOKS LIKE WALPURGISNACHT IS IN FULL SWING. WILL THAT DOOHICKEY YOU GOT THERE BREAK THIS BARRIER?
THIS IS AN ECTOPLASMIC DISRUPTER ACCELERATOR. I BELIEVE IT WILL MOST CERTAINLY DO THE JOB.
LOOKS LIKE A CHAINSAW.
OOO, I LIKE THAT. I'LL CALL IT THE ECTOPLASMIC CHAINSAW, IF YOU DON'T MIND MY STEALING YOUR IDEA?
GET ME THROUGH THIS BARRIER AND IT'S ALL YOURS, DOC.
AHEM.
SORRY, DOC MACABRE, THIS IS DETECTIVE KLIMPT. I'M HELPING HIM ON A CASE.
IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, DETECTIVE. THE WORLD IS CRACKLING WITH EVIL TONIGHT. ALWAYS GOOD FOR AN ADVENTURE.
UH... YEAH. GOOD TO MEET YOU, TOO.
THIS KID IS HELPING US? WHAT IS HE, TWELVE?
THAT "KID" GRADUATED FROM MIT AT TWELVE.

LET'S JUST SEE HOW EFFECTIVE THE ECTOPLASMIC CHAINSAW IS AGAINST A DEMONIC WALL OF PROTECTION, SHALL WE?
FASCINATING.
AAH! WHAT IS THAT, DOC?!
GUESSING—AND THAT'S ALL IT IS—I'D SURMISE IT WAS HELL'S BLOOD, THE REMNANT FLUID OF THE TORTURED SOULS WHICH ARE SUSTAINING FORCES OF THE UNDERWORLD.
GENTLEMEN, DEMONS AWAIT YOU.
YOU AREN'T COMING?
SORRY. CAN'T. I AM ON THE TRAIL OF AN ASSASSIN TURNED VAMPIRE, A DEADLY COMBINATION TO SAY THE LEAST.
THAT WAS WEIRD.
GET USED TO IT.
YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE WEIRD LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN IT.

OH... SHIT.
JUST STAY CALM, KLIMPT. WE GOTTA TAKE CARE OF THEM BEFORE THEY SPREAD OUT.
HRMMM. MORE PEOPLE MEATS!



UH, WHAT DO WE DO?
MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO START SHOOTING.
LIKE SO!
BOOM
AAHHGH!
WE DON'T NEED HOLY WATER OR ANYTHING?
HELL NO. THEY'RE IN OUR WORLD NOW. OUR WORLD, OUR WEAPONS.
WEEEE!
COOL.
BLAAMM

HAVING FUN YET?
I'LL HAVE FUN WHEN WE'RE DONE HERE AND ON TO THE CASE I BROUGHT YOU FOR.
FUNNY THING, THAT.
BLAAMM
BOOOM
I THINK WE CAN GET THIS INFO ON YOUR ATWOODS FROM THESE HELL-GOONS.
IF YOUR REPRODUCING ACTRESS IS IN LEAGUE WITH THE OCCULT, THEN THESE PANSIES WILL KNOW ABOUT IT. EVIL ASSHOLES ARE ALL LINKED, LIKE ANTS AND SHIT.
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING BEFORE?!
BOOOM
AND MISS THE LOOK ON YOUR FACE RIGHT NOW?

LET'S SEE IF THIS ONE'S A TALKER.
HOW ABOUT WE PLAY "LET'S MAKE A DEAL?"
NO DEALS! EAT FLESH!
THAT'S A SHAME.
BOOM
OKAY, ANY OF YOU OTHER FREAKS FEELING CHATTIER THAN DIRT-FOR-BRAINS HERE?!
SHIT!

CHAPTER 8
CLICK
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?
PLEASE. ME NOT HURT. JUST HAVE LITTLE BITE HERE AND LITTLE BITE THERE. ME AM GOING HOME NOW.
NOT JUST YET.
WE HAVE A TALKATIVE ONE OVER HERE.
WELL LOOK WHO'S GROWED UP AND GONE ALL DIRTY HARRY.

HERE, LEMME HAVE 'IM.
WE NEED INFO.
GAK!
ME HAVE LOTS INFO. LET ME AND FRIENDS GO AND WE TRADE.
FINE. WE'RE LOOKING FOR AN ACTRESS WITH SUPERNATURAL CONNECTIONS, MAYBE SOLD HER SOUL TO THE DEVIL.
NARROW IT DOWN. THAT'S MOST OF THEM.
HER NAME IS ATWOOD.
YOU BETTER GIVE ME SOMETHING TO GO ON OR I'LL PAINT THIS HILL RED WITH YOU AND YOUR BUDDIES' BLOOD.
GACK! YES. KNOW HER. CHEATED FATHER AFTER DEAL. WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN.
TRY... DEAD... DETECTIVE... SUNSET & FRANKLIN.

I'LL BET YOU TWENTY BUCKS AND MY LEFT NUT IT'S A FAKE, OR AN ILLUSION. THIS ATWOOD DIDN'T STAY OFF THE RADAR ALL THESE DECADES BEING LISTED.
BUT I ALREADY HAD HER ADDRESS.
SO, WHO'S THIS DEAD DETECTIVE?
NOT SURE, BUT I'VE HEARD SOME STORIES.
AND THEN YOU PROMISE WE'LL DEAL WITH THE ATWOODS? I ONLY HAVE YOU UNTIL MORNING.
GOOD GOD, WHINE MUCH? WE'LL FIND HER AND DEAL WITH IT.
AND DON'T SAY YOU "HAVE" ME 'TIL MORNING. I'M NOT A DAMN HOOKER.

LATER.
SHOULDN'T WE AT LEAST CHECK OUT THE LAUREL CANYON ADDRESS I ALREADY HAVE?
IT'S A WASTE OF TIME. TRUST ME. LET'S TALK TO THIS DEAD GUY AND SEE WHAT HE KNOWS, OKAY?
FINE.
WHAT'S THAT SMELL?
YOUR UPPER LIP. PLAY IT COOL. THIS GUY MIGHT LEAD US RIGHT TO THIS ATWOOD CHICK.
COME IN.
DE COOGAN
RIVATE
ESTIGATOR
WE'RE LOOKING FOR DETECTIVE COOGAN.
STINK AWAY
WELL, YOU FOUND 'IM.

THIS IS DETECTIVE KLIMPT AND I'M CALLED THE GHOUL.
WE'RE LOOKING FOR ESTER ATWOOD.
YEAH, I HEARD OF YOU, JUMBO. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU? I'M A BUSY GUY. THIS CITY IS CRAWLING WITH CREEPS.
ATWOOD?
AW CRAP! FUCK! CRAP!
EELAY. IT'S JUST A LITTLE CINDER.
I HAVEN'T BEEN EMBALMED IN A WEEK. ONE SPARK AND I GO UP LIKE MALIBU.
I'M GONNA GO OUT ON A LIMB AND SAY YOU KNOW THIS ATWOOD CHICK.
KNOW OF HER, AND THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.
I'VE DEALT WITH A LOT OF STRANGE SHIT, DEADLY STUFF, BUT I STAY AWAY FROM BITCHES LIKE ATWOOD. SHE'S IN LEAGUE WITH SHIT THAT WOULD MAKE SATAN CRAP HIS PANTS.

CAN YOU GIVE US ANY CLUE WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH?
NOT MANY PEOPLE CHEAT THE DEVIL AND GET AWAY WITH IT... ESPECIALLY FOR THIS LONG.
SO WE'RE DEALING WITH SATANIC ELEMENTS?
HONESTLY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE IS... THEY ARE... HELL... I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO CALL IT.
CAN YOU TELL US WHERE TO FIND HER? WE HAVE A BULLSHIT ADDRESS IN LAUREL CANYON.
YEAH, THAT PLACE DOESN'T EXIST. THIS IS WHERE YOU'LL FIND HER.
HERE YOU GO. AND YOU KNOW DOC MACABRE, RIGHT?
YEAH, JUST SAW HIM.
THE PUNK'S BEEN CALLING ME NON-STOP. ANY IDEA WHAT HE'S UP TO?
I'M SURE IT'S JUST ANOTHER ONE OF HIS HAREBRAINED PROJECTS.
THANKS.
GOOD LUCK. SEE YA ON THE OTHER SIDE.

IT SHOULD BE UP HERE AT THE CREST OF THE HILL.
HOLY—
—CRAP.
SHOULD WE RING THE BELL?
I SAY WE GO IN FIRING.
HOW ABOUT A COMPROMISE?
RING THE BELL, SHOOTING?
NO... HOW ABOUT JUMPING THE FENCE AND CHECKING THINGS OUT?
I LIKE RING AND SHOOT BETTER.
NICE SNEAKING.
CRRRUNCH

I REALLY THINK WE SHOULD PLAN SOMETHING BEFORE—
SCREW PLANS. THEY'RE OVERRATED.
FOR ALL WE KNOW, THIS FREAK-WOMAN HAS ALREADY DUPLICATED HERSELF AGAIN.
DING-DONG.
WHAM
HEY, ESTER! IT'S MERYL STREEP! I'M HERE TO KICK YOUR ASS!
THE WALLS WERE COVERED WITH MOVIE POSTERS, PUBLICITY PHOTOS, AND FRAMED AWARDS.
THEN, A SOUND, LOW AT FIRST, BUT RISING, A BABY'S CRY COMING FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL.
WAAAAAAAAAAH!
LISTEN...
AT FIRST GLANCE, IT APPEARED EXCESSIVE YET NORMAL, BUT THE MORE SHIFT AND THE GHOUL LOOKED, THE MORE THEY SAW HUNDREDS OF VERSIONS OF THE SAME WOMAN AND IT SENT A CHILL DOWN BOTH THEIR SPINES.

...WE MAY BE TOO LATE. SHE'S ALREADY GIVEN BIRTH—
—TO HERSELF.
IF WE'RE TOO LATE, IT'S YOUR FAULT.
IF WE MAKE IT OUT OF HERE, I'LL TAKE THE BLAME.
NOW YOU HAVE DOUBTS?
WE'RE DEALING WITH SOMETHING THAT SCARES A DEAD DETECTIVE. YEAH, THAT CREEPS ME OUT A TAD. SORRY.
NOW... GET READY BECAUSE THE CRYING IS COMING FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS DOOR.
BAM
WAAAAA WAAAAA
HOLY CHRIST.

OH... SHIT.
ARE THOSE WHAT I THINK THEY ARE?
'FRAID SO, PAL.
SKINS OF HER FORMER SELF.
SO. FUCKING. GROSS.
THERE. LOOK.
FOLLOW THE BLOODY FOOTSTEPS. WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

THEY WERE WAITING FOR THEM ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR—THE TWO IDENTICAL WOMEN AT DIFFERENT AGES, ONE AT THE BEGINNING AND ONE AT THE END.
ESTER ATWOOD STOOD BEHIND HER DAUGHTER AT THE VANITY. ESTER LOOKED OLD AND TIRED NOW. SHE WAS ALREADY WELL PAST HER SO-CALLED PRIME WHEN SHE FILMED THE METEOR MOVIE, BUT NOW, JUST A DECADE LATER, SHE LOOKED WEAK AND FRAIL.
HER DAUGHTER, THE NEWBORN, WAS ANOTHER MATTER ALTOGETHER. SHE WAS SMALL, NO BIGGER THAN THREE FEET TALL. BUT SAVE FOR THAT, SHE WAS AN ALMOST COMPLETELY FORMED YOUNG WOMAN NOT QUITE COMPLETELY DEVELOPED.
HELLO, COUSIN.
DON'T GIVE ME THAT COUSIN SHIT... WHATEVER YOU ARE, WE AIN'T RELATED. JUST COME WITH US AND THERE WON'T BE ANY TROUBLE.
WE HAVE DONE NOTHING.
THAT TUB OF BLOOD AND COLLECTION OF HUMAN SKINS SAYS OTHERWISE.
I WILL TAKE THEIR BLOOD.
I WILL TAKE THEIR FLESH.

CAN I START SHOOTING NOW? I THINK WE SHOULD START SHOOTING NOW.
JUST GIVE IT A SEC, BUD...
"...LET THEM FINISH."
BLAARGH
AEECK
BLAAAAAAH
WE DID NOT SURVIVE THESE CENTURIES UNCHALLENGED. YOU ARE ONE OF MANY. LIKE THOSE BEFORE, YOU WILL DIE, AND YOUR BLOOD WILL HELP US LIVE ON. IT IS OUR CYCLE.

BAMM
THIS IS, HOWEVER, THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE BEEN HUNTED BY ONE OF OUR OWN.
OOF!
FWUMP
ONE OF YOU?! I'M SOMETHING, BUT I SURE AS SHIT AIN'T WHATEVER YOU ARE!
YOU HAVE LIVED FOREVER ON THE FRINGES OF REALITY. NOW YOU WILL DIE LIKE A COMMON HUMAN. YOU DO NOT HAVE THE POWER WITHIN TO DEFEAT US.
YEAH, I'VE BEEN AROUND, AND IF THERE'S ONE THING I'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOU SUPERNATURAL FREAK TYPES...
BLOOM BLOOM
...CROSSES AND HOLY WATER ARE FINE, BUT NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF A BIG-ASS GUN.

NOOO!
VERRES, ESTER. YOUR RUN IS OVER.
I— IT CAN'T BE. IT WAS NEVER SUPPOSED TO END.
YOU CHEAT THE DEVIL AND MURDER THOUSANDS— EVENTUALLY IT CATCHES UP TO YOU.
GAGH!
WHA...?
BANG
AND SOMETIMES CRACKER JACK PRIZES CAN SAVE LIVES.

BEFORE THEY LEFT THE GROUNDS, THE GHOUL AND DETECTIVE KLIMPT SEARCHED AND FOUND GRAVE AFTER GRAVE IN THE EXPANSIVE BACKYARD OF THE ATWOOD ESTATE.
SHE... IT... THEY HAD BEEN KILLING FOR GENERATIONS SO THAT THEY COULD BATHE IN BLOOD.
NEITHER MAN NOR MONSTER COULD FULLY EXPLAIN WHAT HAD HAPPENED, OR WHAT THE ATWOOD WOMEN REALLY WERE.
WELCOME TO MY WORLD.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DEAL WITH THESE TYPES OF CASES ALL THE TIME.
EVERY NIGHT. I'M NOT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM YOU, LLOYD. YOU'RE OUT THERE EVERY DAY JUST LIKE ME.
I DON'T KNOW. YOUR PERPS ARE LOT MORE... UM...
MONSTERY.
IS THAT EVEN A WORD?
IT IS NOW.

THANKS FOR THE HELP.
YOUR CASE. YOU CLOSED IT.
WELL, THANKS, IN ANY CASE, IT WAS GOOD TO WORK WITH YOU.
I'LL BE SEEING YOU AGAIN.
YOU SOUND SO SURE. HOW IS THAT?
YOU'LL SEE. TAKE CARE, KLIMPT.
SIX WEEKS LATER, DETECTIVE LLOYD KLIMPT WOULD RESIGN FROM THE POLICE FORCE. NOT BECAUSE HE WAS DISENCHANTED WITH POLICE WORK. IF ANYTHING, IT WAS THE OPPOSITE.
KLIMPT HAD SEEN THE OTHER SIDE. HE HAD GLIMPSED BEHIND THE CURTAIN, INTO THE SHADOWS, AND HE FOUND HIMSELF UNABLE TO LOOK AWAY.
NOW HE WOULD PURSUE A DIFFERENT KIND OF WORK.
AND THE GHOUL WAS RIGHT.
THEY WOULD SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN.
THE END

WRIGHTSON

DOC MACABRE

CHAPTER 1
DID YOU CALL?
THREE TIMES.
THE RECORDING SAYS HE WILL RESPOND IN THE ORDER THE CALLS COME IN.
HE'LL SHOW.
SO WE COULD BE LIKE THE ZILLIONTH CALLER!
HE BETTER OR WE'RE DEAD.
ATTENTION, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...
RARR.
NAR.

I'M AFRAID THIS EVENING IS OVER AND IT'S TIME FOR ALL OF YOU TO RETURN TO YOUR GRAVES!
DOC MACABRE!
THIS IS MY LAST WARNING.

VERY WELL.
IF YOU WON'T LISTEN TO REASON...
...THEN YOU WILL BECOME MY TEST SUBJECTS.
YOU WERE WARNED.
I HOPE THIS WORKS.

IT WORKS!
PHOOONK
OOOF, MAYBE NOT.
OKAAAAY, NOT WHAT I EXPECTED... NO REASON TO PANIC YET.

WELL, WE'LL CHALK THIS ONE UP TO BEING LUCKY. SUCCESS... AS LONG AS THEY STAY DOWN THERE.
IS IT SAFE, ER... DOCTOR?
JUST CALL ME DOC, PLEASE. AND YES, I'M HAPPY TO REPORT THAT YOUR LIVING DEAD PROBLEM IS SOLVED. YOU MIGHT ALSO NOTE THAT IT'S MUCH TIDIER THIS TIME THAN MY LAST VISIT.
YES. I... I SEE THAT. THEY DO APPEAR TO STILL BE MOVING.
THAT SHOULD PASS SHORTLY. I SUGGEST WAITING UNTIL MORNING AND THEN FIRMLY PACK THE DIRT IN PLACE.
TED WILL SEE TO THAT.
O... OKAY.
FATHER
NOW, ON TO THE TRULY FRIGHTENING PORTION OF THE EVENING, GENTLEMEN... THE BILL.
THAT'S MY DEPARTMENT, I'M AFRAID. SAME FEE AS LAST TIME?
THAT WAS WELL OVER A YEAR AGO... BUT SEEING AS THE CARNAGE WAS SO MUCH LESS, SURE... WHY NOT.
CREDIT CARD OKAY?
AS LONG AS I CAN GET A SIGNAL OUT HERE.

I REMEMBER WHEN HE WALKED THROUGH THE GROUNDS THAT FIRST WEEK HE ARRIVED. HE WAS LIKE, WHAT, NINE, TEN YEARS OLD, AND HE WAS TOOLING ALONG WITH A PILE OF BOOKS ALMOST AS BIG AS HE WAS.
HE SAT RIGHT IN THE FRONT ROW OF THE LECTURE HALL. I RECALL THAT DISTINCTLY BECAUSE, WELL, HE HAD TO. ANYWHERE ELSE AND HE COULDN'T SEE.
HONESTLY, I THINK AT FIRST PEOPLE WERE CURIOUS ABOUT HIM, THEN WHEN HE STARTED AFFECTING GRADE STANDINGS, PEOPLE... WELL, THERE'S NO EASY WAY TO PUT THIS, THEY HATED HIM.
IN CLASS HE WAS VERY ACTIVE AND VOCAL ABOUT ANY LESSON OR LAB, BUT OUTSIDE, HE WAS JUST THIS QUIET KID. HE DIDN'T REALLY TRY TO MIX SOCIALLY WITH US, BUT IT NEVER CAME OFF AS STUCK UP. IT WAS LIKE HE KNEW HE DIDN'T BELONG AND HE WAS OKAY WITH IT.
I FELT A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING, YA KNOW? I LIKED HIM BECAUSE HE WAS THIS UNBELIEVABLY BRILLIANT, NICE KID... BUT THEN I KIND OF RESENTED HIM FOR THE SAME REASONS.
I DUNNO. LOOKING BACK I GUESS IT MUST HAVE BEEN REALLY HARD ON HIM. WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HIM, ANYWAY? I HEARD HE GOT INTO SOME WEIRD, HEAVY STUFF.

THE HOME OF DOC MACABRE.
I'M OUTSIDE THE DOOR, LLOYD. OPEN HO'S DOOR.
I NEED TO RUN SOME TESTS ON THIS NEW WEAPON.
CAN YOU PUT THIS IN THE LAB WHILE I CHANGE?
CERTAINLY, SIR.
ANY MAIL?
NO, SIR.
THANKS, LLOYD.
CLIENTS?
YOU DO, HOWEVER, HAVE VISITORS.

DOCTOR, THIS IS MR. HENRY BROOKS AND MRS. WANDA BROOKS.
THANK YOU FOR WAITING. I'M DOC MACABES.
GOOD TO MEET YOU.
YOU'RE DOC MACABES?
YES. HOW CAN I BE OF ASSISTANCE TODAY?
IT'S OUR HOUSE—
—IT'S HAUNTED.
JUST MOVED IN?
NO, WE'VE LIVED THERE FOR OVER THIRTY-FIVE YEARS!
THAT'S STRANGE. GENERALLY SPEAKING, GHOSTS DON'T MOVE INTO A RESIDENCE. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN EXPERIENCING WHATEVER IT IS YOU'RE EXPERIENCING?

DRINKS?!
AHHH! UM, ABOUT A MONTH.
A GHOST. IT'S DEFINITELY A GHOST.
AND HOW IS THIS GHOST MANIFESTING ITSELF?
IT'S AN OLD MAN. HE'S HAGGARD AND NAKED... AND VERY ANGRY.
HE WANTS US OUT OF THE HOUSE.
AND HOW DO YOU KNOW IT WANTS YOU OUT?
UM... HE KEEPS YELLING 'GET OUT!'
I SEE! POLTERGEISTS GENERALLY DON'T SPONTANEOUSLY APPEAR, BUT IT IS NOT ENTIRELY UNHEARD OF, EITHER. PERHAPS SOMEONE WAS RECENTLY MURDERED NEAR OR IN YOUR HOUSE. ALTHOUGH SOME SPIRITS SIMPLY SIMMER UNTIL THEIR RAGE IS SO GREAT THAT THEY CAN BREAK INTO OUR WORLD AND DO A LOT OF DAMAGE.

SO, YOU'RE INTERESTED IN HIRING ME, YES?
YES, I THINK SO.
WHAT'S IT GOING TO COST US?
FAR LESS THAN THE COST OF REPAIRS AFTER A ROGUE POLTERGEIST TEARS YOUR LIFE TO PIECES.
U... YES... WHATEVER THE COST.
OKAY.
EXCELLENT! I SUGGEST WE START RIGHT AWAY. THE LONGER YOU LET THESE SPECTERS WANDER—THE HARDER THEY ARE TO GET RID OF.
PLEASE PAY LLOYD ON YOUR WAY OUT.
AND IF YOU CAN GIVE ME A RIDE TO THE SCENE I WILL DEDUCT 10% FROM MY FEE.
YES, OF COURSE.
DISCOUNT! DEBIT OR CREDIT?!
BEEP!
THANK YOU! I'LL NEED A FEW SPECIAL ITEMS. I'LL ONLY BE A MOMENT.

WOW! JUST LOOK AT THAT PLACE!
IT HAS BEEN IN MY FAMILY FOR FIVE GENERATIONS.
LOOKS LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A PSYCHO-GHOST MOVIE!
NEITHER OF YOU LOCKED AN OLD CRAZY UNCLE AWAY IN THE ATTIC OR ANYTHING, DID YA?
OF COURSE NOT!
THANK YOU?
OKAY, CALM DOWN. I HAVE TO CHECK ALL THE BASES.

WOW! WILL YOU LOOK AT THIS! IF I WERE DEAD, I'D HAUNT THE HOLY HECK OUT OF THIS PLACE!
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE US TO DO?
I'M GONNA SCAN THE PLACE FOR EVIDENCE OF A HAUNTING. YOU CAN GO WATCH TV OR SOMETHING. IS THERE ANY ONE PLACE YOU'VE HAD ENCOUNTERS MORE THAN OTHERS?
NOT REALLY. HE SEEMS TO APPEAR EVERYWHERE.
WHAT A WEIRD GHOST.
I MEAN—I HAD THIS ONE GHOST THAT WOULD ONLY RIDE A BIG WHEEL UP AND DOWN THE HALL AT NIGHT, BUT HE WAS ALWAYS IN THE SAME PLACE. IT'S ODD FOR THEM NOT TO. I MEAN— GENERALLY THEY HAUNT ONE PARTICULAR SPOT AND...
MR. ... DOC... SIR.
B... BEHIND YOU.
WOW!

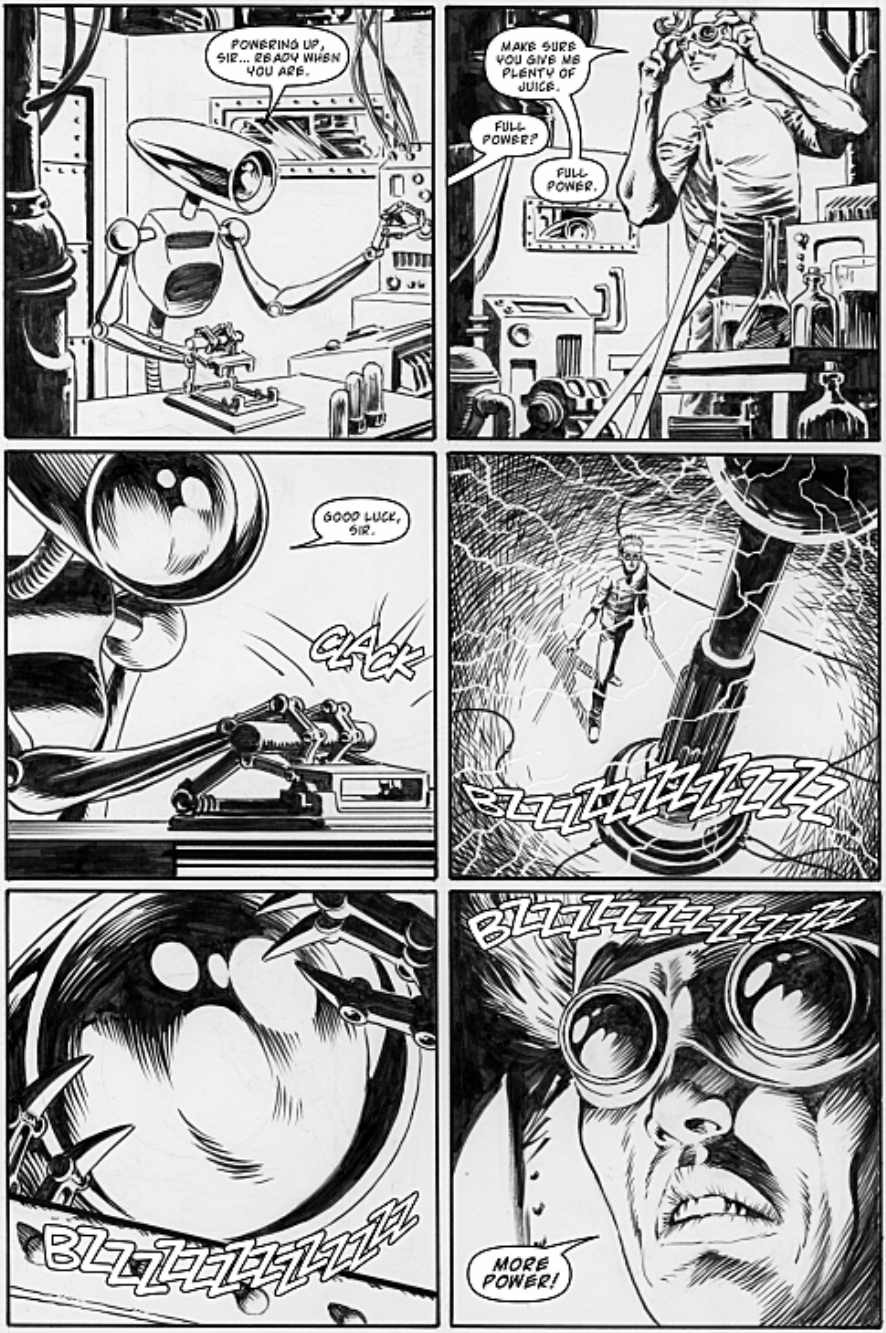
EWWW, THAT'S JUST GROSS, JEEZ, DON'T THEY HAVE ANY UNDERWEAR IN THE AFTERLIFE?

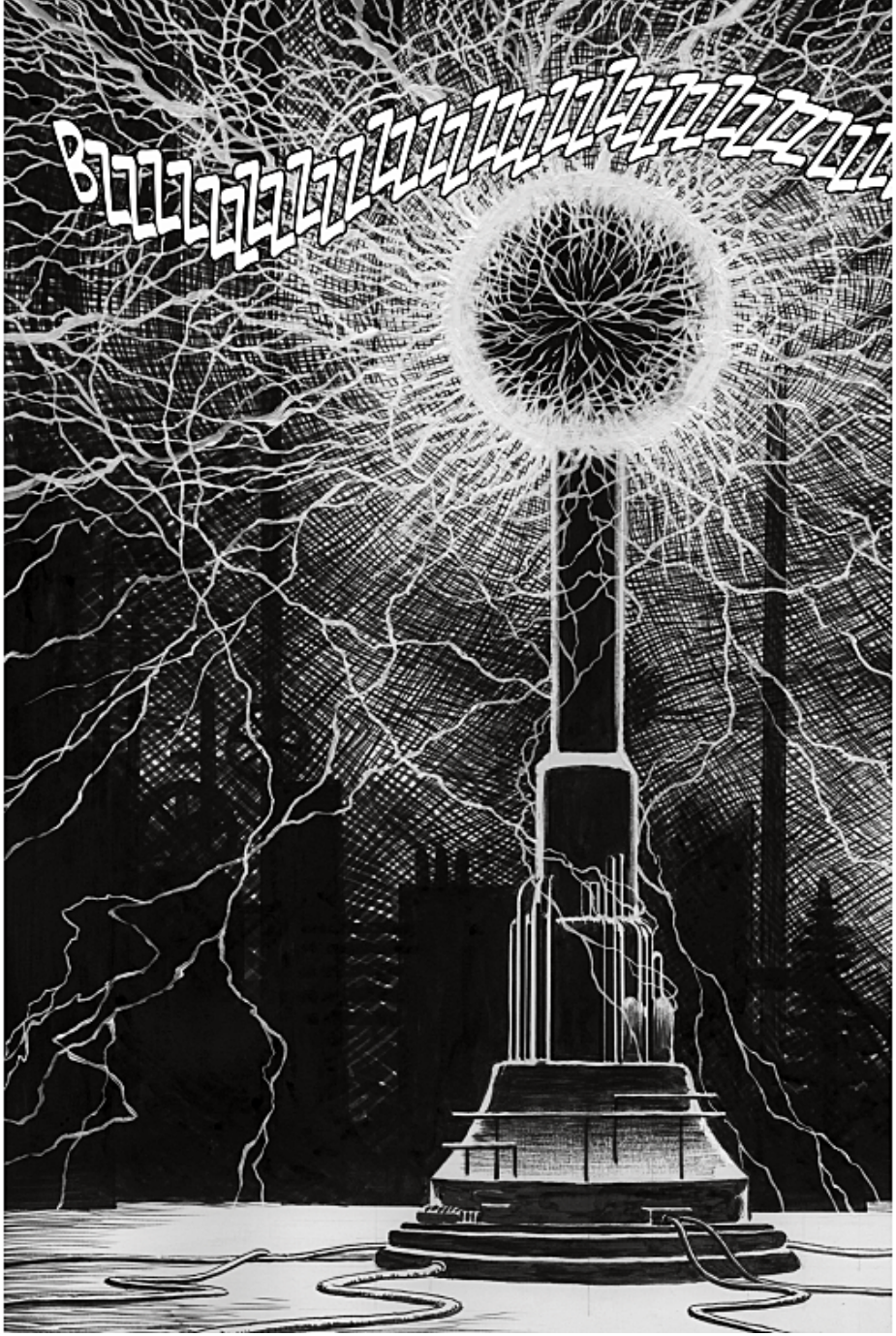
AHHHHH!
STAY CALM, FOLKS. I HAVE A NEW INVENTION HERE THAT SHOULD DO THE—
GET OUT!
WHACK
OOF!
GET OOOOOOOUT!
GONNA BE LIKE THAT, IS IT?
HEY! GRAMPS!
WHEN YOU GET BACK TO HELL, GRAB YOURSELF SOME TIGHTY WHITEYS.

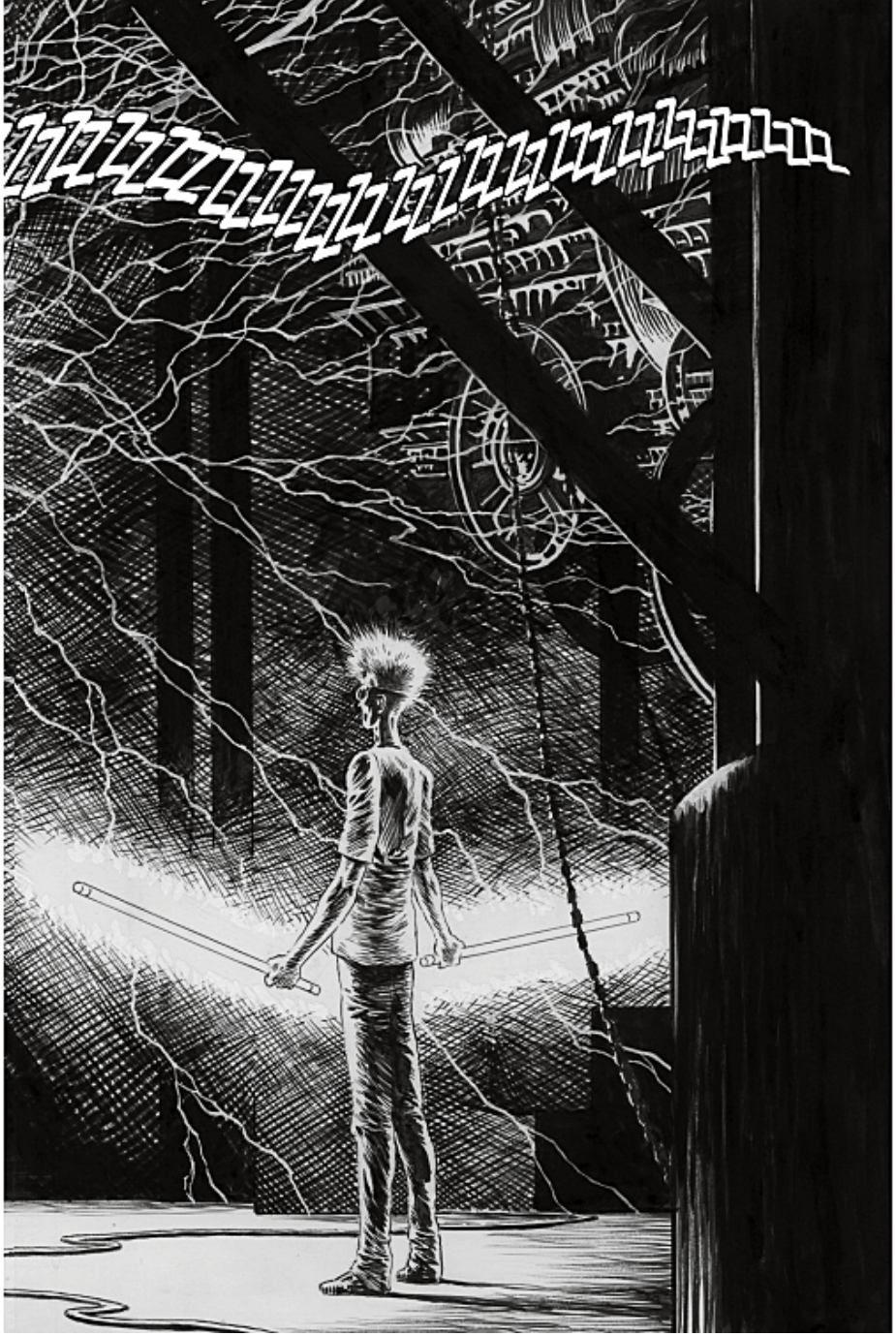
POP
BZZZZZZZZZZZ SZURP
FAIL.
POP
OUT!
THIS MIGHT BE A BIT TOUGHER THAN I ORIGINALLY ANTICIPATED.

CHAPTER 2
BING BONG BING BONG
OK, OK. COMING!
THE GHOST STOLE MY KEYS.
WHERE ARE THE CLIENTS?
I SUGGESTED THEY CHECK INTO A HOTEL UNTIL I FIGURE THIS MESS OUT.
WHAT HAPPENED?
I TOLD THE GHOST TO LEAVE, BUT HE HAD OTHER IDEAS.
OTHER CALLS HAVE BEEN COMING IN, SIR. RATHER URGENT.
LATER, PLEASE.
I WANT TO GET THE ECTO-FUSION COIL UP AND RUNNING. I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR CALLS RIGHT NOW.
BUT—

LOOK, LLOYD, I JUST GOT THE CRAP KICKED OUT OF ME BY THE GHOST OF A NAKED OLD MAN. I REALLY DON'T HAVE TIME FOR—
YOU PROGRAMMED ME TO ALERT YOU TO ANYTHING OF IMPORTANCE. I AM INCAPABLE OF TRANSMITTING TRIVIAL INFORMATION, SIR.
YOU GOT ME THERE. TELL ME ABOUT THE CALLS.
THERE WERE SIX CALLS. THE CALLERS ALL CLAIM TO HAVE SUDDEN PROBLEMS WITH HAUNTING. I THOUGHT THE SIMILARITIES TO THE CURRENT CASE WERE STARTLING.
HMMM, YES. INTERESTING.
AFTER WE RUN THE COIL TEST, I WANT YOU TO LOOK INTO THESE CALLS FOR ME.
ME?
LOOK INTO OTHER RECENT GHOST SIGHTINGS.
MAYBE DROP BY GOODAN'S PLACE. SEE WHAT HE KNOWS. ALSO, CALL KEVIN. HE MIGHT HAVE SOME INFO.
KEVIN, SIR?
OH, I MEAN THE GHOUL. DON'T CALL HIM KEVIN. HE'LL RIP YOUR ARMS OFF.
CAN YOU MAN THE CONTROL PANEL? AND MAKE SURE THE BACK-UP GENERATOR IS READY IN CASE WE BLOW THE POWER AGAIN.


POWERING UP, SIR... READY WHEN YOU ARE.
MAKE SURE YOU GIVE ME PLENTY OF JUICE.
FULL POWER?
FULL POWER.
GOOD LUCK, SIR.
CLACK
MORE POWER!

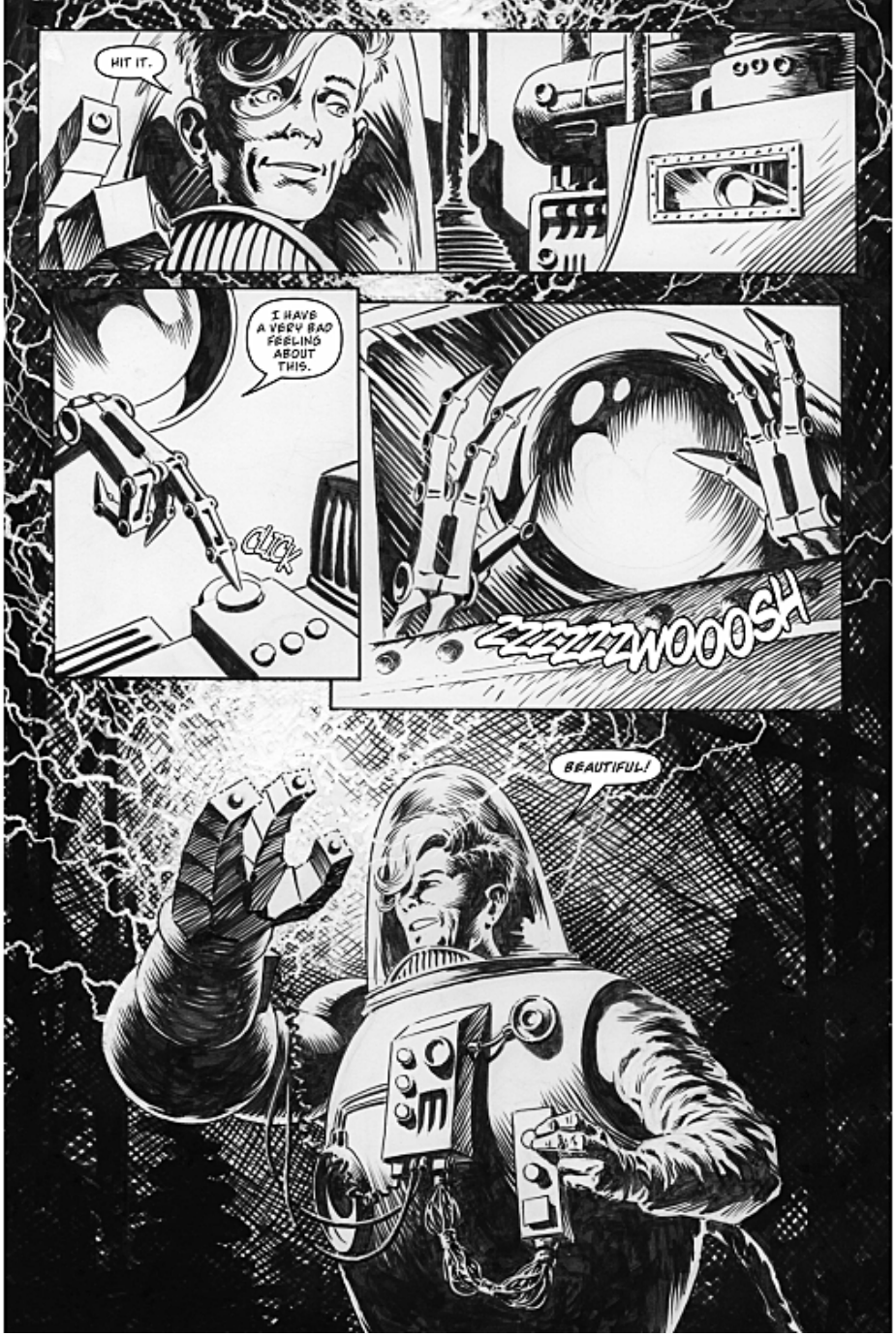

BZZZ



BOOOOM
CRASH
ARE YOU OKAY, SIR? SHALL I CALL THE PARAMEDICS?
IT WORKS!

THAT APPEARS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS, SIR.
JUST NEEDS A TWEAK OR TWO.
HELP ME BUILD AN ECTO-REFRACTOR SUIT.
WHAT IS THAT?
I'LL KNOW WHEN I BUILD IT.
THIS IS PERFECT. GRAB THE WELDING TORCH AND SOME COPPER WIRE.
THIS SHOULD CONDUCT THE POWER PERFECTLY AND PROTECT ME. HELP ME GET IT ON.
O... ON, SIR?

NOW LET'S JUICE THAT THING UP AND CATCH US SOME NASTY GHOSTS.


HIT IT.
I HAVE A VERY BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.
CLICK
ZZZZZZWOOOSH
BEAUTIFUL!

LETS REEL 'EM IN!

HMMM, VERY INTERESTING. I SET THE MAGNETISM LEVELS ACCORDING TO READINGS FROM THE GHOST THAT ATTACKED ME, YET THERE IS NO RESPONSE FROM THESE GRAVES.
NOW, LET'S SEE HOW THE ATTACKER GHOST RESPONDS.
"VOILA!"
WE GOT 'IM! SLOWLY DECREASE POWER AND PULL HIM HERE.

HE'S FIGHTING!
EASE UP, THEN INCREASE POWER AND REPEAT UNTIL HE'S WEAKENED!
STEADY, LLOYD!
OK, NOW! MARK IT AND LOCK THE POWER LEVEL.
GET OUUUUUT!
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, YOU'RE IN MY HOUSE NOW, AND NEITHER OF US IS GOING ANYWHERE UNTIL WE FIGURE OUT JUST WHAT YOU ARE.

WHOAH!
WHAT IS IT?
AH-HA! WELL, IT APPEARS WE HAVE SOME UNEXPECTED RESULTS.
SEE THAT?
YES, BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
HE GLITCHED OUT FOR A MOMENT. GHOSTS DON'T GLITCH. GRAB THE PORTABLE AURA-EXTO SCANNER AND WE'LL SEE.
WHAT?
NOW THE CALLS YOU MENTIONED BEGIN TO MAKE SENSE.
THIS IS NOT A REAL GHOST! I CALIBRATED THE ECTO-FUSION COIL TO REEL HIM IN BASED ON HIS SPECIFIC READINGS. IF HE WERE REAL, THEN THIS ROOM WOULD BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRITS OF THE DEAD. YOU FOLLOW?
THEY DO?
YES... I THINK.
YES, BUT WE NEED MORE INFORMATION. I NEED TO STAY HERE AND RUN MORE TESTS AND TRY TO FIGURE OUT THIS GHOST'S TRUE ORIGIN, AS WELL AS FIND A WAY TO CONTAIN HIM.

I NEED YOU TO GO OUT AND DO A LITTLE INVESTIGATING FOR ME. LIKE I MENTIONED BEFORE, DROP BY COOGAN'S IF YOU NEED HELP.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE JOKING, SIR. I'VE NEVER LEFT THIS HOUSE.
THERE'S A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING, LLOYD.
BUT, SIR— WHAT IF I'M SEEN?
YOU'LL BE FINE. IF THERE'S ONE THING I'VE LEARNED, IT'S THAT PEOPLE DON'T SEE HALF OF WHAT YOU THINK THEY WILL. BUT JUST IN CASE, IF YOU ARE SPOTTED, FREEZE UP AND PRETEND YOU'RE A LAMP.
FIND THE COMMON DENOMINATOR AMONG THE CALLS, THE LINKS TO REAL ESTATE AND THE HAUNTINGS, AND WE'LL HAVE ANSWERS, LLOYD. GHOSTS, HOUSES, REAL ESTATE. SOMEWHERE IN THERE WE WILL FIND WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR.
YES, SIR.
AND GET ME A NEW SET OF KEYS MADE WHILE YOU'RE OUT.
KEYS? WHERE?
I DON'T KNOW... THE KEY. MAKING. STORE?

HMMM. SOME TRACES OF ECTOPLASMIC ACTIVITY TO BE SURE, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING *DIFFERENT*. I'LL JUST NEED TO RUN SOME—
BING BONG
BING BONG
YOU FORGET SOMETHING, LLOYD?

GET OUT!
PANG
OK. OW. THAT HURT.

CHAPTER 3
THIRD FLOOR, PLEASE.
SURE, WHY NOT?

TAP TAP TAP
JOE COOL
PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR
IT'S OPEN!
I REMEMBER YOU. DON'T TELL ME. I KNOW WE'VE MET.
I DON'T BELIEVE SO, SIR.
SURE. YOU'RE DOC MACABRE'S, RIGHT?
THAT IS CORRECT, DETECTIVE. CALL ME LLOYD.

I had a severe hard drive crash last year. I lost a lot of memory. Perhaps we met then?
Maybe.
What brings you to this side of town, Lloyd?
The Doctor sent me with instructions to ask you for help on a case involving hauntings and real estate.
That old scamp! Yeah, I know some people.
He also said you might possibly know how to find the ghoul.
That I can help you with a lot sooner.
CLICK

TELL US ABOUT THE CASE.

AND WHY DIDN'T MACABEE CONS HIMSELF?
HE'S BUSY.

MEANWHILE...
CRASH
OOF!
OKAY, NOW I'M ABSOLUTELY SURE YOU AND YOUR SKINNY FRIEND AREN'T REAL GHOSTS.
COME ON... FOLLOW ME, YOU FAT—
—FUUUUUUUUUUUUUU!
OH, NOOOO!

INTERESTING.
AS I SUSPECTED, NOT GHOSTS AT ALL.
CRASH
THESE SPECTERS ARE SOME KIND OF PROJECTION.
NNF!

I'M BACK, DOC, AND I HAVE SOME LEADS.
IS THAT A CIGARETTE?
COOGAN GAVE IT TO ME. DON'T I LOOK COOL?
GIMME THAT.
BUT—
I'M ABSOLUTELY SURE THESE GHOSTS ARE SOMEHOW MANUFACTURED. DID COOGAN AND THE GHOUL HAVE ANY TIPS?
THE REAL ESTATE MAN! I'VE SEEN HIS ADS ON BENCHES AROUND TOWN. I THINK MY INITIAL INSTINCT WAS CORRECT.
THEY SURE DID. AS SOON AS I DESCRIBED THE CASE, COOGAN SUGGESTED WE CHECK OUT A MAN NAMED WINSLOW SCHMELING.
THE GHOUL MENTIONED THAT SCHMELING HAS ALSO BEEN SUSPECTED OF RUNNING SHAM FORTUNE TELLING SCAMS. APPARENTLY HE EVEN CALLS HIMSELF THE REAL ESTATE SWAMI.
YES, YES. I'VE SEEN HIS PHOTO. HE WEARS A TURBAN.

INSLOW SCHMELLING
SWAMI
OF
REAL ESTATE
I'LL MAKE YOUR HOUSE DISAPPEAR
CALL NOW 1-800-SWAMI-40
DISHONEST, TACKY, AND POLITICALLY INCORRECT: A DEADLY COMBINATION.
EXCUSE ME, LITTLE BOY.
WHAT?
IS THE LAMP FOR SALE?
SORRY, LADY.
ME AND THE "LAMP" HAVE WORK TO DO.

THIS IS THE STREET. IT SURE HELPS HAVING BAD GUYS WHO POST THEIR ADDRESS ALL OVER TOWN.
2109
TAROT
PALM READING
CHECKS CASHED
I THINK YOU FOUND IT, SIR.
YEP.
REAL ESTATE
CAN YOU FEEL IT, THE ENERGY COMING FROM THIS PLACE?
BING-BONG
MY SENSORS DETECT DISCORDANT ENERGY AND ODD ELECTRICAL FIELDS.
JUST PLAY IT COOL WHEN HE ANSWERS.

HELLO! WELCOME TO—
—WHAT D'YA WANT, KID? I'M BUSY AND I DON'T WANT ANY COOKIES, MAGAZINES... LAMPS, OR WHATEVER ELSE YOU'RE PEDDLING.
I'M HERE INVESTIGATING THE HAUNTING OF THE HOME OF HENRY AND WANDA BROOKS.
AH, I SEE. PLEASE, COME IN.

SO, YOU AND YOUR TOY ROBOT ARE HERE PLAYING AMATEUR DETECTIVE, AND I'M A SUSPECT?
HE'S NOT A TOY, AND I'M NOT AN AMATEUR ANYTHING.
HOW ADORABLE. I'M VERY BUSY. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
SOLD
FOR SALE
IS IT TRUE YOU ARE NOW ACTING AS REAL ESTATE AGENT AND THAT YOU ARE NOW REPRESENTING THE BROOKS HOME AS WELL AS SEVERAL OTHER HOMES... WHICH HAVE BEEN SUDDENLY VACATED DUE TO "HAUNTING"?
I'M NOT IMPLYING ANYTHING. I'M ACCUSING YOU, RIGHT TO YOUR FACE, BUSTER.
ARE YOU IMPLYING THAT I AM CONNECTED TO THE HAUNTING?
WELL, YOU GOT ME, KID. I'LL STOP.
JUST KIDDING!

AND I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, PUNK! LITTLE TROUBLEMAKER WHO CALLS HIMSELF DOC MACABRE! SOME KIND OF SELF-MADE MONSTER HUNTER WITH GADGETS GALORE!
YEAH, THAT'S ME. SPEAKING OF GADGETS, WHERE ARE YOURS? HOW'D YOU PROJECT THE GHOSTS?
I DON'T NEED MACHINES TO CONTROL THE SUPERNATURAL!
ALLOW ME TO DEMONSTRATE!
THE DEAD ARE GOING TO LOVE YOU!

RISE! I COMMAND YOU!
HE'S USING HIS TURBAN TO RAISE SPIRITS AGAINST THEIR WILL, SIR.
YEAH, THIS IS MUCH WORSE THAN I THOUGHT.
YOU LITTLE PUNK! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY TIMES YOU'VE ALREADY SCREWED UP MY PLANS?! FIRST YOU DE-ZOMBIE MY HORDES IN THE GRAVEYARD.
YOU AND YOUR DAMN MACHINES! NONE OF YOUR LITTLE GADGETS WILL SAVE YOU NOW!
THAT WAS YOU?
YES IT WAS ME!

ZIIIP
GRISH
HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS GADGET?
DAMN.
WELL, SEE YOU AROUND.
I'M RUINED. WHAT WILL I DO?
FOR STARTERS, YOU MIGHT WANT TO MOVE. YOUR GRAVEYARD NEIGHBORS ARE GOING TO BE A LITTLE MAD AT YOU AFTER THIS.
IS THE CAB HERE YET, LLOYD?
YES, SIR.
SLAM

SHOULDN'T WE CALL THE POLICE, SIR?
AND HAVE HIM ARRESTED? ON WHAT CHARGES? RELAX, LLOYD. THE POLICE WOULD NEVER BELIEVE US, ANYWAY.
Crescent TAXI
BUT I HEARD A TERRIBLE SCREAM AND HE MIGHT NEED—
I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING... AND NEITHER DID YOU. GOT IT?
OH, NO, SIR. I MEAN, YES, SIR. I DIDN'T HEAR A THING. I MEAN, BUT SHOULD WE JUST SAY GOODBYE, OR SOMETHING?
SAY WHAT YOU WANT. HE CAN'T HURT ANYONE ANYMORE SO I SAY, GOODBYE AND GOOD RIDDANCE.
THE END

BERNIE WRIGHTSON ART GALLERY

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'70

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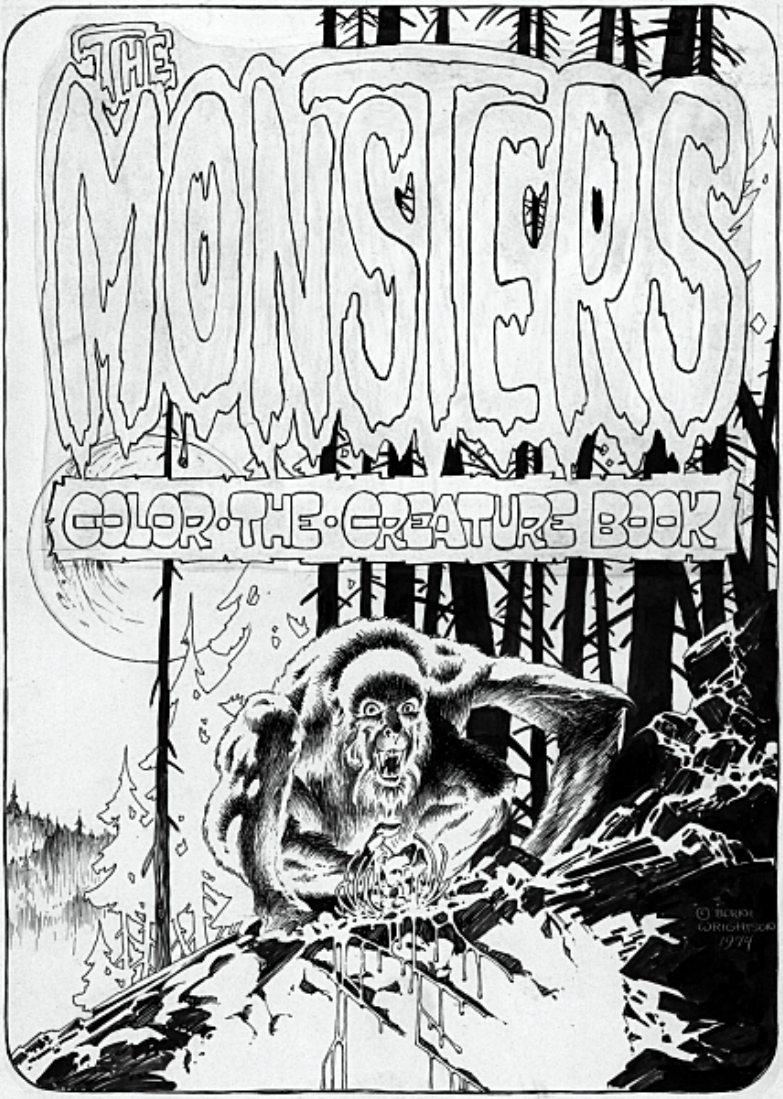
WRIGHTSON
'69

GOODYEAR
BERNI WRIGHTSON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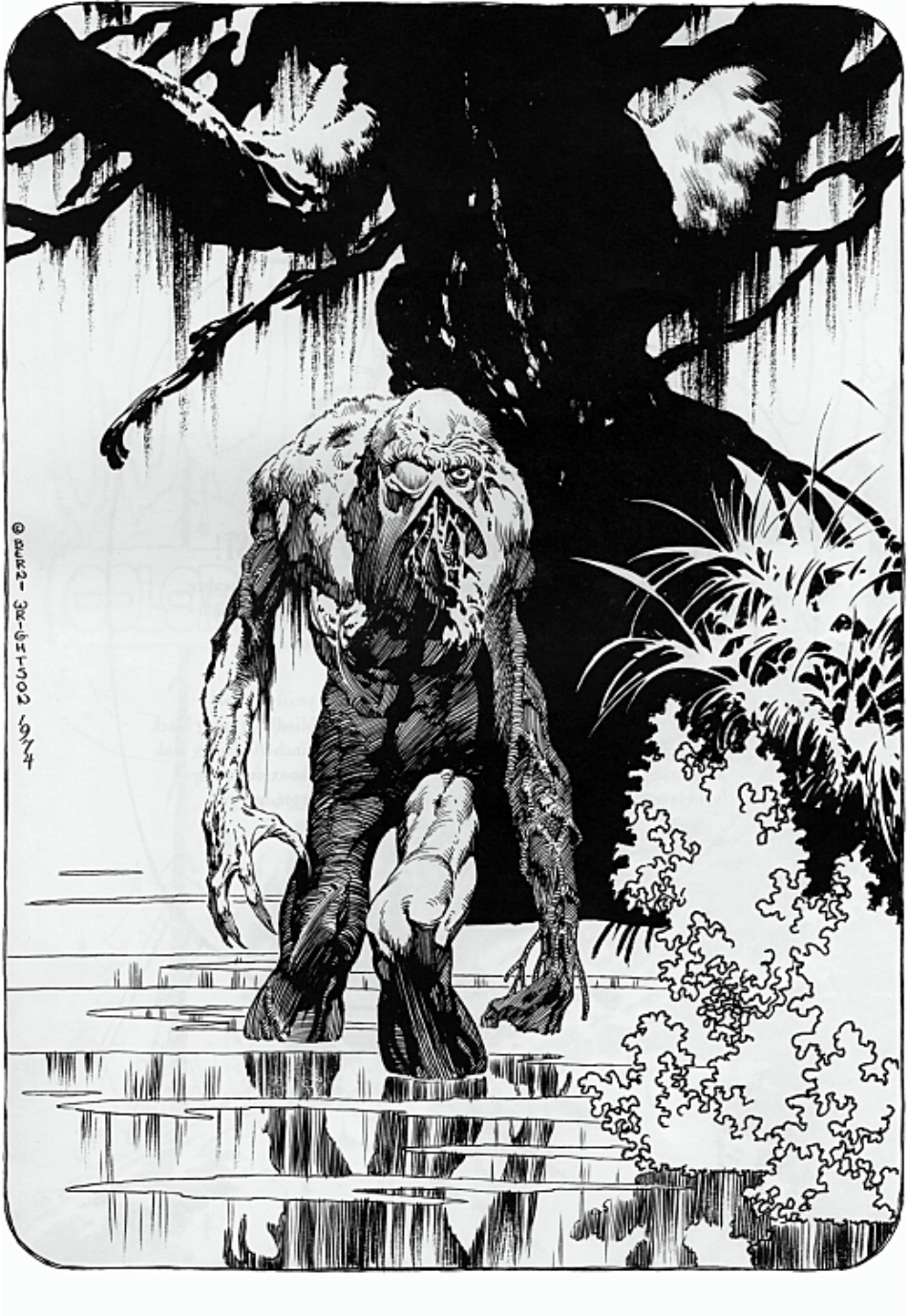
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DEAD, SHE SAID

THE GHOUL

DOC MACABRE

One modern horror mainstay combines with one legendary master in this showcase of Bernie Wrightson's beautiful black and white art.

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